



## **Welcome to Sri Lanka**

A Handbook for US Fulbright Grantees



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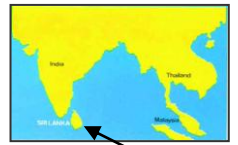
### **Appendix: Domestic Notes for Sri Lanka (Compiled by U.S. Fulbrighters 2008-09)**

*The cover depicts a Sandakadaphana; the intricately curved stone base built into the foot of the entrances to buildings of ancient kingdoms. The stone derives its Sinhala name from its resemblance to the shape of a half-moon and each motif symbolises a concept in Buddhism. The oldest and most intricately carved Sandakadaphana belongs to the Anuradhapura Kingdom.*

"My preparation for this long trip unearthed an assortment of information about Sri Lanka that was hard to synthesize – history, religions, laws, nature and ethnic conflict on the one hand and names, advice, maps and travel tips on the other. As a newcomer cognizant that sensory overload was inevitable, I grasped at details that might keep me out of trouble, deliver me to my intended destinations and arm me with questions to ask when the moment presented itself."

- Jane E. Schukoske, Selected Letters and Poems, *Excursions and Explorations*, ed., Tissa Jayatilaka

# Sri Lanka



Sri Lanka



## **Welcome**

Hello and welcome. You are now moments away from becoming a fully-fledged member of the Sri Lanka Fulbright fraternity. You are on the threshold of a long journey to begin a momentous experience in a tiny corner of the world known, among other things, as “the pearl of the Indian Ocean”. The island of Sri Lanka, about the size of West Virginia, is far more complex a place than most visitors imagine it to be and is living proof of the perception that looks can be deceptive. No handbook could give you anything more than a glimpse into a particular country or a socio-economic entity. This is doubtless true of Sri Lanka. No one person’s Sri Lanka will necessarily mesh with another’s. Accordingly, each Fulbright scholar will discover her own Sri Lanka bearing in mind as she does so the wisdom contained in the old Spanish proverb that reminds us of there being no one path that each of us follows: Traveller, there is no path; paths are made by walking.

Sri Lanka is a green and pleasant land, so bountifully blessed by nature. Her people, for the most part, are friendly, hospitable and generous. So do seek to enjoy your stay. In the process, do please bear in mind that achieving academic goals you have set for yourself is but half of your Fulbright project. The other is the more challenging exploration of the culture and society of Sri Lanka with a view to being a discerning and sensitive interpreter of this island for your fellow citizens – especially to those less privileged than you who are yet to visit Sri Lanka’s shores – once you return home upon completion of your Fulbright sojourn here.

The very best of wishes.

**Tissa Jayatilaka**  
**Executive Director, US-SLFC**

## Sri Lanka Fact Sheet

**Official name:** Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

**Government type:** Republic

**Location:** Latitude 5° 55. to 9° 50. north, longitude 79° 42. to 81° 52., 650km north of the equator

**Dimensions:** 430km north to south, 225km east to west Coastline: 1,340km

**Currency :** Sri Lankan rupee (LKR)

**Independence:** 4 February 1948

**Administrative capital:** Sri Jayewardenepura

**Commercial capital:** Colombo

**Administrative divisions:** 9 provinces; Central, North Central, North Eastern, North Western, Sabaragamuwa, Southern, Uva, Western, Eastern Province.

**Climate:** Typically tropical, with a northeast monsoon (December to March) bringing unsettled weather to the north and east, and a southwest monsoon (June to October) bringing bad weather to the south and west

**Highest mountain:** Pidurutalagala, 2,524m

**Highest waterfall:** Bambarakanda, 263m

**National Flower:** The Blue Water Lily (*Nymphaea stellata*)

**National parks and nature reserves area:** 8,000sq.km

**Population:** 21,128,773

**Population growth rate:** 1.3%

**Population Density:** 309 people per sq Km

**Life Expectancy at Birth:** 74 Female, 64 Male

**Literacy rate :** Female 87.9 Male 92.5

**Ethnic groups:** Sinhalese 73.8%, Sri Lankan Moors 7.2%, Indian Tamil 4.6%, Sri Lankan Tamil 3.9%, other 0.5%, unspecified 10%

**Languages:** Sinhala (official and national language) 74%, Tamil (national language) 18%, other 8% Note: English (a link language commonly) is used in government and spoken competently by about 10% of the population

**Religion:** Buddhist 69.1%, Muslim 7.6%, Hindu 7.1%, Christian 6.2%, unspecified 10%

**Time zone:** Sri Lanka Standard Time is five and a half hours ahead of GMT. (Allowance should be made for summer-time changes in Europe.)

**International dialing:** +94 or

**Electricity:** 230 . 240 volts, 50 cycles AC.

**Economy:** Sri Lanka's most dynamic sectors are food processing, textiles and apparel, food and beverages, port construction, telecommunications, and insurance and banking. In 2006, plantation crops made up only 15% of exports (90% in 1970), while textiles and garments accounted for more than 60%. About 800,000 Sri Lankans work abroad, 90% of them in the Middle East. They send home more than US\$1 billion a year.

## **Sri Lanka: An Overview<sup>1</sup>**

Sri Lanka – Taprobane of the Greeks, Serendib of the Arabs, Ceylon of the Europeans – according to its chronicles, has been an independent Kingdom since its establishment on the very day on which the Buddha passed away from the earth and attained Nirvana, 483 B.C. Coincidentally, this is the same day on which Vijaya, a refugee Aryan prince from India is thought to have landed in Sri Lanka and set up the kingdom on the North central plain of the island. The island's ancient inhabitants are supposed to have been devils and demons – aboriginal tribes called Yakhas and Nagas.

The island was subject to a series of major invasions and minor forays from various South Indian dynasties during the Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa Kingdoms (periods) up to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The capitals were shifted to the hill country on several occasions, culminating in the last Kingdom of Kandy in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

With the capture of the King of Kandy on 19 February, 1815, the island of Sri Lanka lost its independence, "an independence which had continued without any material interruption for 2,357 years" as the legend, interlaced with history, continues to have it. It is important to remember that Sri Lanka has the most impressive chronicle record of its history backed by epigraphical evidence in South Asia.

The British rule of the entire island of Sri Lanka, which began in 1815, ended only on 4 February, 1948 with the grant of independence. Some politicians and certain observers consider the transfer of power that took place in 1948 as a spurious form of independence on the grounds that political freedom without economic freedom is in reality a hollow freedom. In 1948, in other words, this island merely ceased to be a British colonial possession. On several fronts – defence and economics to name but two – Sri Lanka continued to be heavily dependent on Britain.

In any assessment of the political development of Sri Lanka, one significant fact emerges of which serious note has to be taken. This is the fact that Sri Lanka was the first country in Asia in modern times to introduce adult suffrage in 1931 – well over a decade and a half before independence. There have been several low points – notably during the life of the governments of 1970, 1977 and 1980 – in Sri Lanka's post independence democracy to-date. The fact that the centre held despite these upheavals is attributable in large measure to the political consciousness and maturity of the Sri Lankan electorate. The capacity of the masses for extra parliamentary agitation stems largely from their early experience with democratic politics.

As a former colony of Britain it was perhaps natural for Sri Lanka to adopt the British political model but unlike Britain, Sri Lanka had no tradition of Parliamentary Government. There was a form of popular government in local affairs, but no monarch of Sri Lanka ever consulted duly constituted representative bodies at the centre over issues of general governance. Sri Lanka has a predominantly rural population, which is agriculture-oriented and heterogeneous in composition. Economically, Sri Lanka is an underdeveloped or developing nation. There is a multi-party system although the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and the United National Party (UNP) are the dominant political entities.

The economic status of countries like Sri Lanka in the contemporary world leaves much to be desired. Foreign financial capital yet has a controlling power over the Sri Lankan economy through such spheres as "aid", Banking, insurance and the tea trade. In today's uni-polar world the economic climate is even harsher than before and small, resource-poor states like Sri Lanka are likely to become increasingly dependent on foreign capital for survival. In this regard the fact that Sri Lanka was the first country in South Asia to modernise its economy post-1977 and adopt a liberalised economy may prove advantageous in the long run. Misguided and

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpts from *Sri Lanka – 1948 to the Present: An Overview* by Tissa Jayatilaka



politicised trade unionism, a hangover from the 1950's, unless checked, may hamper economic development.

Despite the brutal and costly civil war that rages in the North and East of the island, Sri Lanka has managed to keep its economy steady and, generally speaking, the island nation is able to boast of a quality of life that compares very favourably with developing nations of Asia.

The structure of Sri Lankan society itself contributed to some of the nation's past and contemporary problems. In today's Sri Lanka the problems arising from caste differences are no longer as much a threat as those arising from religious and ethnic rifts and divisions.

The Sinhalese, who form the majority community, are divided not only by caste differences but also by religious and other cultural distinctions. Although the vast majority of the Sinhalese are Buddhists, there are the Christians among them who, though much fewer in number are, as a spin-off of colonial policy, socially more powerful and influential in inverse proportion to the numerical strength. The division between the "up-country" and "low-country" Sinhalese, surprising as it may seem, is a factor to be reckoned with even in this day and age!

The Tamils of Sri Lanka consist of two groups – Sri Lankan and Indian. They are predominantly Hindu but there are Christians among them as well. Among the Hindus – whether they be Sri Lankan or Indian Tamil – the ancient caste system operates with greater rigidity than among the Sinhalese. The continuing war between the Sinhalese and Tamils of Sri Lanka has resulted in the migration of many Tamils to all corners of the world in recent years. The Tamils, in proportion to their numbers, in the early years following I

Independence came to dominate the public sector and the learned professions of Sri Lanka because of greater educational opportunities. The Indian Tamils who form the bulk of the population in the tea plantation areas in the central highlands occupy a vital place in an important sector of the Sri Lankan economy. The other Indian Tamils are for the most part traders and shopkeepers. Sri Lanka, as noted above, has an under-developed economy basically capitalist and therefore highly competitive with limited employment opportunities. Given the reality, it should come as no surprise to note that one of the major social and political problems of our times, to put it mildly, has been and continues to be the tensions and frictions between the Sinhalese and Tamils of Sri Lanka.

The Muslim community, a much smaller section of Sri Lankan society than the Tamil, is differently placed in relation to the Sinhalese. They fall, broadly speaking, into three groups. First, there are the Sri Lankan Moors whose connections with the island go far back into its history to the time of the arrival of their forefathers as traders. The second group consists of the Malays who appear to have originated from the Javanese regiments, which were brought over by the Dutch in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The third comprises those Muslims of the Eastern Province who have pursued an agrarian way of life and who for generations have been agriculturalists in the rural hinterlands of that province. The Muslims, the 1915 riots notwithstanding, have unlike the Tamils not been in acute competition or rivalry with the Sinhalese in recent times. One of the present dangers however, especially in the Eastern Province, is the increasingly fractious, generally uneasy, often acrimonious and potentially explosive relationship between the Tamils and the Muslims.

Sri Lankan Burghers – the descendents of the Portuguese and Dutch – and a handful of North Indian traders – Gujaratis, Borahs and Parsis – are also a part of the Sri Lankan social mosaic.

To add to the social divisions based on caste, ethnicity and religion there continued to be in post-British Sri Lanka two other significant socially divisive tendencies which had their origins in British rule and which cut across caste and ethnic distinctions. One is the class distinction, a product of the emerging capitalist economy and the social order that the British helped to bring about, and the other, closely related to and interwoven with the concept of class, is the English language. Sri Lankan society came to be – and continues to be – divided into two clear-cut



groups on the basis of English and these are its English-speaking and the Swabasha or indigenous language speaking segments. The former is made up of those belonging to the western-oriented middle class of urban Sri Lanka. A good percentage of the Christians, especially those of the Protestant persuasion, belong to this group. British rule produced an English educated class of about 6% of the nation's population, not surprisingly, it was this small coterie which in effect monopolised the best jobs in both the government and the mercantile or private sectors of Sri Lanka, apart from dominating the professions. Although its numbers have dropped significantly due to the migration of a sizeable segment of this class to "greener pastures", the English speaking class continues to remain in a dominant position to-date.

The introduction of English as a medium of instruction in education resulted in the growth in Sri Lanka of an English educated "elite" which was, in reality, a very small segment of the society as a whole. In a heterogeneous society such as Sri Lanka is, this elite was drawn from all ethnic groupings and English education for a brief period seemed to be the unifying influence in post-British Sri Lanka. The inability, however, of the political leadership of independent Sri Lanka to extend the benefits derived from familiarity with and a command of the English language to a wider segment of Sri Lankan society in combination with the ruthless exploitation of the explosive potential of the politics of language (Sinhala/Tamil) for narrow political gain led in the main to the bitter and brutal reality of the ethnic war of today.

The introduction of free education in 1944 helped, at first, significantly to redress the imbalance between the socially privileged and other. As years went by and the demand for education grew dramatically, the state could not meet the rising expectations of the rural intelligentsia. The aspirations of the poor and the marginalized in particular were, by and large, not met. The takeover or the nationalisation of schools perpetuated the distinction between state and private schools (fee levying and non-fee levying). That free education enabled new social layers, both urban and rural, hitherto deprived of educational opportunities to obtain a place in the sun is undeniable. The introduction of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction and later Sinhala as a state language in 1956 also had their positive impact on the Sri Lankan polity. The gains, however, were short-term. The unpardonable lapse of not according to the Tamil language in 1956 the status conferred on Sinhala that year and the failure to implement a sound island-wide English teaching programme served to undermine the early success of the free education system and the initial benefits derived from it could therefore not be sustained. The inability of the state to meet the high expectations engendered by the grant of free education resulted eventually in the youth revolt of 1971 led by the more literate and articulate members of the educated peasantry. These "beneficiaries" of free education could not find gainful employment commensurate with their educational attainments and the high hopes based on those attainments. The resultant frustration and despair led to revolt.

Among the major challenges before the state in the sphere of education are the following:

- a. To work out a process by which the stranglehold the state has over education may be dismantled and legitimate private initiative enabled to complement free education so as to promote excellence and choice.
- b. How to accommodate the ever increasing numbers seeking comprehensive education without sacrificing quality.
- c. The improvement of English language, science and mathematical skill of students and;
- d. The elimination of the mis-match that presently exists between education and employment through meaningful diversification of education.

## **The Sri Lankan Education System<sup>2</sup>**

### Changes in the structure of education:

The new system, which was introduced in 1999 and fully implemented by 2000, includes changes from Grade 1 to 13.

Age of admission to Primary School is 5 and since 1999 a new, child-centred integrated curriculum has been introduced as from Grade 1 itself.

At the end of the Senior Secondary, when the child has completed 11 years of formal school years, s/he sits for the O/L exam. Passes in 6 subjects including three with C passes are required to enter the Collegiate Level.

At Collegiate Level, a student would learn 3 subjects for two years and sit for the GCE A/L exam. It is important to note that at the end of combined Primary, secondary, and Collegiate education the student completes 13 years of formal education. (This is a notable change from the 1986 Project for International Educational Research –PIER - publication – pg SL8).

Another significant change was the re-introduction of English as the medium of instruction. The students are now given the opportunity to select their medium from a choice of the 2 native languages or English. More Sri Lankan students are now opting for English as their medium of instruction. In addition, there are many international schools that coach students for the UK O/L and A/L exams.

b) The change in the A/L curriculum

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<sup>2</sup> Excerpts from *Sri Lankan Credential Evaluation* by Nelum Senadira

Changes to the A/L syllabus were introduced in 1998 and the first batch of students sat the exam under the revised version in 2000. The primary change was the reduction of the number of subjects from 4 to 3. Prior to the change, a student studied each of the 4 subjects for 5.3 hours per subject per week for two years. But now, a student has to study each of the 3 subjects for 6.6 hours per week for two years. Two core subjects, namely, The Common General Paper (CGP), evaluating the candidate's general knowledge and IQ and a General English paper were introduced. Whereas to be eligible for admission to university under the new scheme, a student must pass all three subjects as well as the CGP, the pre-2000 candidates needed only 3 out of 4 subject passes to qualify. Admission to University is now based on the Z-score. In addition to merit, this system takes the difficulty level of the subjects taken into consideration when deciding on the cut-off mark for admission.

### **University Level Studies**

Sri Lanka has 13 National Universities and admission to them is based on all three passes at the Sri Lankan A/Ls. Due to restricted facilities admissions have become extremely competitive. Only 2% of the students who sit the A/L examination are admitted to the universities.

First stage: Certificate, Diploma, and Bachelor's Degree.

Certificates and diplomas are conferred after one or two years. A Bachelor's Degree after three years as a General Degree or after 4 years as a Special Degree. A degree in Medicine is awarded after 5 years of study with an additional year of internship, which is compulsory.

Second stage: Master's Degree, M Phil, Postgraduate Diploma.

A Master's Degree is obtained after two years of study beyond the Bachelor's Degree and has a dissertation in addition to papers on theory. The M.Phil syllabus consists mainly of research and may go on for 3 years. Postgraduate Diplomas, unless stated otherwise, generally require one year of study.

### **Institutes recognized by the Ministry of Education (Sri Lanka) as degree granting authorities as of Feb.2004**

#### **13 national Universities**

- |                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| ▪ University of Colombo             | ▪ Eastern University, Sri Lanka         |
| ▪ University of Peradeniya          | ▪ Rajarata University of Sri Lanka      |
| ▪ University of Sri Jayewardenepura | ▪ Wayamba University of Sri Lanka       |
| ▪ University of Kelaniya            | ▪ South Eastern University of Sri Lanka |
| ▪ University of Moratuwa            | ▪ Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka  |
| ▪ University of Jaffna              |   |
| ▪ University of Ruhuna              |   |
| ▪ Open University of Sri Lanka      |   |

#### **7 Other affiliated Institutes**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| ▪ Institute of Aesthetic Studies             | ▪ National Institute of Library and Information Sciences |
| ▪ Institute of Education                     | ▪ Institute of Technology                                |
| ▪ Institute of Indigenous Medicine           | ▪ School of Computer, University of Colombo              |
| ▪ Gampaha Wickramarachchi Ayurveda Institute |  |

(\* DOR refers to Date of Registration)

**Other Degree Awarding Institutes;**

- Institute of Technological Studies: DOR – Dec 15 1988/ Bachelors Degree in Computer and Computer System Design
- Institute of Surveying and Mapping: DOR July 24 1990/ degree of Bachelor of Science (Surveying Science.
- Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology (Guarantee) Ltd: DOR Oct 17 2000/ Bachelor of Information Technology Degree.
- Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration DOR April 24 2003/ Postgraduate Diploma in Public Management and Financial Management, Degree of Master of Public Management
- National Institute of Fisheries and nautical Engineering: DOR Dec 16 2003/ Degree of Science in Fisheries and Marine Science (General & Special), Degree of Bachelor of Science in Marine Engineering (Special), Degree of Bachelor of Science in Boat Building & Naval Architecture (Special)

**Pre-departure**

## Official Grant Documents

Student and English Teaching Assistant grants are generally for a duration of 9 months. Research and Lecturing Scholars are advised to confirm the duration of their grants with CIES and the US-SLFC.

The issue of the official grant document formalises your status as a Fulbright grantee, however your grant is contingent upon satisfactory medical clearance.

The US-SLFC will issue you three copies of the official grant document, which needs to be signed by you.

1. Please sign all three copies. Keep one for your records, send one to IIE (in the case of student scholars) or CIES (in the case of research and lecturing scholars) and;
2. send one copy back to the US-SLFC. The US-SLFC copy may be scanned and emailed to the US-SLFC (fulbright@fulbrightsrilanka.com)
3. US-SLFC Fax number: + 94 11 256 4153.

Under no circumstance should you leave for Sri Lanka without signing and returning your grant document to the US-SLFC and to IIE/CIES. Your grant will not be activated until you send the signed grant papers to both the US-SLFC AND to IIE/CIES. Also, please make sure you get confirmation that your signed grant document has been received by the US-SLFC and CIES/IIE.

For details on the grants made to scholars, please see the section on *Money Matters*.

## Obtaining your Visa

Obtaining a visa from the Sri Lankan Embassy in Washington/ your country of residence is a time consuming process. The process requires authorisation from the Sri Lankan Ministry of Higher Education before the Department of Emigration and Immigration can request the relevant Embassy to grant you an entry visa. Therefore please begin the following process as soon as you can.

### • What you need to do:

1. **URGENT:** As soon as you are selected as a grantee, send a scanned copy of your passport (and those of your dependents), which should be valid for at least 6 months beyond the last day you will be in Sri Lanka during the time of your grant, to the US-SLFC by fax or email (see cover page for addresses). We will initiate action to get approval from the Department of Immigration and Emigration in Sri Lanka. This will be done 1-3 months prior to your date of departure.
2. Obtain a Visa Application Form/s, for yourself and accompanying dependents, from the Sri Lanka Immigration Dept. Site (Entry Visa – Form B): See link below: <http://www.immigration.gov.lk/web/images/stories/pdf/form/EntryVisa.pdf>
3. Embassy of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka Address:  
2148, Wyoming Avenue NW  
Washington DC 20008

Telephone Nos  
(202) 483 4025 - 26  
(202) 352 0355 (Emergencies/After hours)

Fax Nos  
(202) 232 7181

E-mail  
slembassy@slembassyusa.org Web: <http://slembassyusa.org/consular/issue-of-visas-to-travel-to-sri-lanka/>

4. Fill this form/s and keep it with you until we, at the US-SLFC, get back to you with the reference number of the fax sent to the SL Embassy in Washington by the Controller of Immigration and Emigration in Colombo, recommending that the Embassy issue you an Entry Visa.
5. Fulbright scholars are not required to pay visa fees at any stage. If the scholar's dependents are not planning to stay in Sri Lanka for more than 1 month they are advised to arrive on a Tourist Visa. The visa can be obtained from this site: <http://www.eta.gov.lk/slvisa/visainfo/center.jsp>
6. Once we request you to do so, send your passport/s, with the completed forms (through a courier or registered mail) to the Embassy in Washington D.C. (do not send your application to any other SL consulates such as the Sri Lankan consulate in NY or CA). It helps to make phone contact with the visa officer and let him/her know that your application (as a Fulbright scholar) has been sent for an entry visa. Please send them a copy of your grant document. If you want the passport sent back to you by post, you will need to include postage – please speak to the consular officer about this.
7. The Embassy will issue an Entry Visa/Approval for 30 - 90 days. The process for obtaining the Residence Visa will be initiated by the US-SLFC when you arrive in Sri Lanka. You will not need to initiate any action at the Airport when you arrive in Sri Lanka.
8. Bring 2 passport size photographs with you for your residence visa. However, many grantees have informed us that getting their photos in Sri Lanka is more economical.
9. Please note that you need to inform Fulbright Commission whether you are planning to be in Sri Lanka during your grant period or a portion of your grant period with a partner or a dependent. This is irrespective of whether your partner/ family will be accompanying you under Fulbright sponsorship.
10. Please also note that the US Embassy in Sri Lanka has requested that all grantees register at the following site. This is mandatory: <https://step.state.gov/step/>



### Travel<sup>3</sup>

The US-SLFC will provide you round-trip transportation. Our travel regulations make it necessary for you to travel via the most direct route from your home city to Colombo, Sri Lanka and on US flag carriers whenever they operate en-route. We will arrange your travel and have our travel agent in Colombo send you a ticket (pre-paid travel authorization – PTA) in your name to your local airline office:

1. **Contact Mrs. Chitra Marambe, Accountant, at the US-SLFC on email: [chitra@fulbrightsrilanka.com](mailto:chitra@fulbrightsrilanka.com) for travel arrangements.** After consulting Chitra, if it is mutually agreed that you purchase your ticket, then go to steps 2, 3, 4, & 5
2. Arrange your travel itinerary (with a travel agent or through an airline), by the most direct route, from nearest your home to Colombo, Sri Lanka (Katunayake International Airport). Include detailed flight information, stopovers and arrival (date and time) in Sri Lanka.
3. You may be able to make firm reservations for your travel, or if the travel agent or airline will not give you reservations until the ticket is paid for, you may obtain a tentative itinerary and fare quotation to send to Chitra. Chitra will then let you know whether to go ahead with the purchase.
4. Also, please contact Chitra regarding travel arrangement details, including whether the Fly America guidelines must be followed for your travel. US-SLFC will bear only the cost of international travel taken by the most direct route from your residence to Colombo. The cost of additional travel or extra stopovers will be at your expense.
5. Advise Ramya, Deputy Director, of your incoming travel arrangements.
6. If you decide to purchase the ticket yourself, please bring all necessary receipts as proof of purchase for re-imbursement. If you need funds to purchase the ticket Chitra will wire-transfer the funds to you when you give the bank details. Funds will be sent to you (not to the travel agent) once your signed grant document has been received by the US-SLFC.

### Things to Bring<sup>4</sup>

#### Suggestions for clothing and packing list

Garments are by far Sri Lanka's most important export in terms of revenue. This has agreeable consequences for residents here! The products of many European and American stores can often be bought in Colombo for a fraction of the cost that they will retail for in America/Europe. Finally, it will be necessary that you develop your own idea of what is and feels appropriate in your place of work or home environment.

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<sup>3</sup> Adapted from the CIES – Sri Lanka Fact Sheet

<sup>4</sup> Adapted from the VSO Sri Lanka Postings Pack

### Formal wear:

Cotton clothes and leather footwear are by far the best option for anyone living in a tropical country such as Sri Lanka. Although a wide variety of cotton clothes are available in Malls such as Odel, Cotton Collection, Leather Collection, Bata, DSI, House of Fashions and Barefoot in Colombo, (at times with brand names such as Banana Republic, and Tommy Hilfiger) you might find it hard to get larger or extra-large sizes particularly in trousers and shoes.

#### Women

Dresses, skirts, blouses/shirts, pants and shalwars are expected and appropriate for work. Try to ensure dresses etc. are of a modest design - not too short, revealing or see through (unless you want to wear an under slip). It is easy to feel uncomfortable in the "wrong" clothes. Most women seem to prefer loose dresses, as these are more comfortable in the heat.

#### Men

Shirts, trousers, shoes and socks are good enough for most formal occasions - even weddings. You may want to bring a jacket just in case but this is not essential (especially since it can often be uncomfortably hot), but many scholars have their jackets and suites tailored in Sri Lanka for a fraction of the cost that would have been spent in the US. Short-sleeved loose cotton shirts are the most comfortable and are very easy and cheap to buy here. On the other hand, bring lightweight cotton trousers with you. Ties are not usually required at work but it is worth having a selection for important functions. Most Sri Lankans wear shoes and socks to work but sandals are more comfortable and should be acceptable.

### **Casual wear**

#### What is inappropriate?

Usually very tight T-shirts and trousers (although leggings **are** worn here if covered by a long, loose T-shirt); transparent clothes; shorts (especially for women) although Bermuda shorts are acceptable for men; very short dresses. However, on some beaches, city centres and at tourist resorts the same restrictions do not apply.

It is important that a bra is worn. Being braless is not acceptable in Sri Lankan culture and, while harassment seems unrelated to the time of day or location, appropriate dress gives confidence in dealing with the situation.

#### Other than these guidelines, most casual wear is acceptable.

Jeans are hot but can be useful. They are essential for motorbike riders (or passengers). Jumpers/sweatshirts are necessary for visits to the hill country, where it can be surprisingly cold, but a large selection of winter wear is manufactured and on sale here (i.e. Colombia fleeces and jackets).

Most Sri Lankan men, and many women, wear a sarong (cheap and freely available) around the house. For women, a sarong is also worn for a well/river bath.

Most Sri Lankans wear flip-flops or simple sandals for casual wear. Both are cheap if often low quality here. A pair of trainers or strong shoes are useful for bike-riding, up-country visits, hill-climbing etc and regular motor bike riders should have at least two pairs of strong shoes with sturdy heels that cover the foot.

For females, buying good quality underwear that lasts frequent washing can be difficult out of Colombo. However, international brand named underwear (eg. Triumph, Victoria's Secret) are now sold in shops in Colombo and through retail agents around the island.

For men, underwear is available locally but there is not a wide selection of styles or quality.

### Sports/swimwear

Swimsuits/bikinis are only appropriate at tourist hotels, hotel beaches or a number of tourist 'resorts' (i.e. Unawatuna). Elsewhere it is more appropriate to wear a sarong to cover up.

### The Hill Country (or up-country)

In Nuwera Eliya, and the surrounding areas in the central "hill country ", it is wet and cold for six to eight months of the year, the nights being particularly chilly, sometimes frosty. So if you are planning to travel, you may need to buy warmer clothing (i.e. jumpers, trousers, socks, tights, underwear etc.). Waterproof, strong shoes/trainers are also essential. Waterproof jackets and pants are easy to find, usually excellent quality and are cheap here if you do not wish to use your baggage allowance for these. Factory seconds of such famous brands like Columbia etc can be found but Gore-Tex is unavailable.

## **Other Things to Pack**

### Toiletries

Most types of toiletries are available although imported brands can be expensive. Local brands are cheap and readily available.

The following is worth bringing since you may not have the time or inclination to brave the shops at first. However, except where specified, all these items are available around the island.

Insect repellent	Difficult to buy here (especially those not containing DEET), although the herbal citronella oil is readily available.
After-bite care	You will get bitten!
Shaving equipment	Better to bring battery operated than mains operated
Tampons	Available in shops in Colombo but quite expensive and offers no choice, so worth bringing plenty

Contact lens fluid	Expensive and only available in a few places, so bring plenty (a spare pair of contacts is a good idea as well)
Contraceptive pills	Available over-the-counter but different brands to those available in Europe/Canada/USA
Antiperspirant	Both local and imported products are available, the latter of course, are expensive
Small battery operated hand-held fan	Ideal for when you are sweltering in the heat.
Sunblock	It is strongly recommended that you bring a plentiful supply with you - the sun is fierce here and sun block, when available, is expensive and offers little choice.

### **Other**

Swiss Army Penknife	Don't leave home without one.
Small hold-all/frameless rucksack	Essential but can be bought here.
Sunglasses	Available but either expensive or low quality.
Camera	Sealable plastic bags are good for cameras and keeping damp out. Silica gel is essential for cameras to keep the moisture away.
Herbs and special ingredients	Basil, oregano, rosemary, bay etc. Make a nice change from chillies. Balsamic vinegar, truffle oil, sun dried tomatoes, pine nuts and pesto sauce etc are not easily available here.
Photographs of family friends,	Good to show Sri Lankan friends. home etc .
Sports equipment/games/books	whatever keeps you amused.
At least 2 passport type Photographs for visas etc.	There are a few instant photo booths around.

Books

The latest fiction is difficult to find and expensive.

Basic first-aid kit

Most medicines are very cheap and widely available. If you prefer a particular pain killer etc bring it with you. *See the section on health for more details.*

Those travelling with children will have a different set of needs. Good quality, children's leather shoes are hard to find, while branded footwear such as Nike and Adidas are readily available. The bookshops stock collections of children's books, but the choice of age appropriate books is limited as are specific educational material.

Computers and electronic items:

Electricity in Sri Lanka is 220-240 volts at 50 cycles, so transformers must be used for any 110-volts electrical equipment. Electrical fluctuations are common in Sri Lanka and therefore the use of surge suppressants and current regulators are advisable.

All makes of computers, printers and electronic equipment (DVD players, etc), are usually readily available (at duty-free prices at the airport arrivals lounge) through the local market.

The price of a laptop, with speakers etc may range from US\$1000 to 400 depending on whether the computer is an original or a locally assembled product. For anyone who does not want to spend too much on branded equipment that could be affected by the humidity, damp, mildew and according to some grantees, insects; a locally assembled computer from a good service agent may be a better option to investing on high quality electronic equipment that may not be able to cope with the environment here.

A Laptop, a digital camera, a scanner and a printer etc., brought in for personal use do not need customs clearance as long as they are within your allowance. If you are bringing these items with you, please carry them in your hand luggage. It is advisable for you to bring with you backups for your system software and all your programmes. We urge you to contact the US-SLFC before entering into any transactions with local firms regarding items you as a Fulbrighter are entitled to bring in duty free. In the past, Fulbright scholars who neglected to do so have had to endure a great deal of inconvenience and aggravation arising out of arcane bureaucratic procedures.

## **Customs Clearance**

You will be classified as a foreign passport holder pending a Residence Visa on arrival at the airport.

If you are planning to bring any taxable items please inform the US-SLFC Programme Officer prior to your departure so that we can request the duty waiver that you are entitled to as a Fulbright Grantee from the relevant authority. If you are planning to bring items that are not within your baggage allowance particularly electrical and electronic equipment please inform the US-SLFC as early as possible giving the following details:

- Name of item
- Make
- Model
- Serial number

Useful website: <http://www.customs.gov.lk/>

A lap top computer, your camera for personal use etc can be carried in your hand luggage as personal effects and will not be taxed. It is advised that you hand carry all valuables.

## **Health & Medical Insurance**

According to the Health Officer of the U S Embassy in Colombo, there are no mandatory vaccinations when visiting Sri Lanka. However, the following are recommended, especially if you are planning to travel around Sri Lanka.

- Vaccination against Japanese B Encephalitis (three injections over one month)
- Pre-exposure vaccination against Rabies (three injections over one month)
- Vaccination against Hepatitis A (two injections over 6 months & Hepatitis B (three injections over 6 months).
- Diphtheria/Tetanus vaccine booster
- Typhoid vaccine (especially if travelling to India)
- Polio booster with 10 years of last dose or childhood series

### **Malaria Prophylaxis:**

Malaria prophylaxis is also recommended if travelling extensively out of Colombo. Malaria is most common in the North, East, and the Central Province/Cultural Triangle area. The recommended drugs for prevention therapy are Mefloquine, Doxycycline, Malarone, or Primaquine. Advice on these regimes can be obtained from travel medicine clinics or the Embassy Health Unit. Chloroquine is no longer recommended for Sri Lanka since resistance to this medication is growing.

## **MEDICATIONS and MEDICAL SUPPLIES**

Please be aware that while medical care is available and expanding greatly in Colombo and elsewhere in Sri Lanka, many commonly used medications in the USA are not available here. Any medications that you use regularly (especially prescription items) should be brought for your entire stay. Also, commonly used medications like Pepto-Bismol, some anti-histamines, and nasal decongestants are not marketed here, or contain ingredients not approved by the FDA, so consider carefully your over-the-counter medications and bring

any that you might need. Your medical care, received on the local economy, will be provided on a cash only basis. Some facilities will accept credit cards, but most require cash payment. You should keep receipts for care obtained locally for reimbursement by your health insurance company and ASPE.

The facilities of the US Embassy Health Unit are not available to Fulbright Grantees. However the unit may be able to advise you on appropriate care and action if you have a medical related query. Please contact the Embassy Foreign Service Health Practitioner on the following email address for inquiries about vaccinations and prophylactics:

[wijesunderar@state.gov](mailto:wijesunderar@state.gov)

### **Medical insurance - Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE)**

The US Department of State provides basic medical insurance to all Fulbright Scholars for the entire period of the grant. Although the insurance cover most medical conditions that are not pre-existing, grantees are advised to retain their private health insurance coverage or to take additional insurance to provide benefits not offered by the Agency's basic policy.

In the event that emergency medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) of an exchange grantee is required, and the grantee does not have insurance to cover medical evacuation costs, the Department of State will pay the expenses of the medical evacuation.

Please note that local healthcare providers do not accept insurance cards such as ASPE. You will be required to pay by cash or credit card (if the provider accepts credit cards) and claim from ASPE later. Contact Ramya if you need to make an ASPE claim while in Sri Lanka.

#### Useful websites:

<http://www.cdc.gov>

<http://www.astmh.org>

<http://www.tripprep.com>

<http://exchanges.state.gov/aspe>

## **Diplomatic Pouch INSTRUCTIONS FOR SHIPMENT OF BOOKS AND EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS BY FULBRIGHT SCHOLARS**

American Fulbright grantees wishing to send books and educational materials to certain countries of assignment via the diplomatic pouch may do so on a one-time (outbound ONLY) basis, if authorized by the Public Affairs Section of the American Embassy in that country. Use of the diplomatic pouch is a privilege which, if abused, can be withdrawn by the U.S. Department of State. It is important that grantees and foundations/commissions adhere to the rules governing use of the pouch.



The pouch may not be used for return shipments to the United States.

**CONTENTS:**

Packages must contain only books, magazines, notes or other similar educational materials required for the grantees' teaching or research program overseas. Packages may not contain personal effects of any kind. The Department of State may open packages suspected of containing prohibited items. If prohibited items are discovered, the box will be returned to the sender. Grantees should not enclose items that are irreplaceable. There is no way to trace items lost in the pouch system. Department of State does not assume responsibility for lost or damaged packages. Grantees should not ship anything that will be damaged by x-rays.

**NUMBER OF PACKAGES:**

No more than four boxes per grantee may be sent through the pouch system.

**WEIGHT AND SIZE LIMITATIONS:**

Each box must not exceed 24" in length and total length and girth must not exceed 62". Measure longest side or length then girth, around two shortest sides, to obtain total length and girth. Each box cannot exceed 40 pounds.

Boxes rejected by the Department of State because of improper size, contents, or packaging will be returned to the sender.

**WRAPPING:**

Materials must be packed securely in strong cardboard boxes sealed with heavy-duty packing tape (strapping tape is best), and clearly labelled. Boxes should be packed carefully since torn or broken packages will not be repacked by the mailroom

## **ADDRESSING THE PACKAGE:**

Return address (upper left-hand corner): Name  
Street Address  
City, State, Zip

Mailing Address: Public Affairs Officer  
Department of State  
(4-digit zip code; see p.3) (capital) Place  
Washington, D.C. 20521- (plus 4-digit zip code; see p. 3)

### **Example**

**Public Affairs Officer please  
pass to  
US-SL Fulbright  
Commission  
ATTN: Ramya Chamalie  
Jirasinahe**



### **Added address for countries with Fulbright Commissions:**

ATTN: PAO please pass to  
(Name of Fulbright Commission)  
ATTN: (name of program officer)

In lower left-hand corner of the box write: UNCLASSIFIED VIA AIR POUCH  
Your Name  
FULBRIGHT SCHOLAR EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

NOTE: Please choose a return address where the recipient will know how to contact you and what to do if packages are returned.

Grantees sending only one package should write "1 of 1" in the lower right-hand corner. Grantees sending more than one package should number each package in a series and circle the markings, e.g., "1 of 3", "2 of 3" and "3 of 3".

## **SHIPPING**

Grantees are responsible for paying domestic postage from their home to Washington, D.C.

## **TIME REQUIRED FOR SHIPMENT**

Grantees should anticipate that once packages are received at the Department of State, shipping time will take from four to eight weeks, sometimes longer, to arrive in the country of assignment. The frequency of pouch shipment is outside the control of the Department of State or the receiving U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

## Department of State Pouch Zip Code – Sri Lanka

### Country: Capital

4-digit zip code in **bold**

### # of Boxes allowed

**SRI LANKA: Colombo**

**4**

**20521-6100**

### Example

**ATTN: PAO please pass to:  
US-SLFC  
ATTN: Ramya Chamalie  
Jirasinghe  
Department of State  
6100 Colombo Place**



For inquiries about use of the diplomatic pouch write to: [DPM-answerperson@state.gov](mailto:DPM-answerperson@state.gov)

You could have your packages and letters sent Care/Of the US-SLFC during your stay in Sri Lanka.

### Preparing for Change

A senior scholar, writes the following on the eve of his departure to Sri Lanka;

"I am as prepared as one can get for this journey based on my last Fulbright Senior Scholar status a few years ago. The experience is just like getting married. You think you knew everything when you said yes; then you spend the rest of your life learning how to do it right. There is a saying in Tennessee that goes like, \*if it ain't fun, don't do it.\* A Fulbright assignment, anywhere in the world, is FUN. Moreover, The Fulbright Commission pays you to have fun! I am Fulbright Senior Scholar assigned to Peradeniya University in Sri Lanka to lecture on cell and molecular biology topics. How do you get ready for something like that? Load up your lap top with every modern CD on the subject, but take the overhead transparencies just in case, and of course once you get there be prepared for the "chalk and talk" mode!

In my work in Tennessee, I always have the advantage of knowing what to expect from my students and from my colleagues and the populace around me. In a place like Sri Lanka, one has to change, modify, accommodate and improvise as you go along. That is what I call a challenge and a lot of love for learning goes into that. When you finally realize that the students are learning and you are learning with them, it makes up for all the FUN in the world. Every scholar in the U.S. must experience this at least once in his or her life time."

Prof. S.K.Ballal from Tennessee, Senior Scholar, University of Peradeniya

## Other Resources

### Books:

Sri Lanka: History, Culture and Politics	John Holt
Excursions and Explorations – Cultural Encounters Between Sri Lanka and the United States	Tissa Jayatilaka
Sri Lanka: A Survey	K M de Silva
Ethnic and Class Conflict in Sri Lanka	Kumari Jayawardena
The Broken Palmyrah	Rajan Hoole
<u>A Sinhalese Village in Sri Lanka: Coping with Uncertainty</u>	by Victoria J. Baker
<u>Exploring Confrontation: Sri Lanka: Politics, Culture and History (Studies in Anthropology and History)</u>	by Michael Roberts
<u>Food of Sri Lanka</u>	by Douglas Bullis
<u>Island of Blood: Frontline Reports from Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Other South Asian Flashpoints</u>	by Anita Pratap
<u>Exotic Tastes of Sri Lanka -- by</u>	Suharshini Seneviratne;
<u>Manners, customs, and ceremonies of Sri Lanka</u>	by Minivan P. Tilakaratna
<u>The politics of Ceylon (Sri Lanka)</u>	by Robert N. Kearney
<u>Sri Lanka by Rail</u>	by Royston Ellis
<u>On Understanding Buddhists: Essays on the Theravada Tradition in Sri Lanka (Suny Series in Buddhist Studies)</u>	by John Ross Carter
<u>Libraries in Sri Lanka : their origin and history from ancient times to the present time</u>	by T. G. Piyadasa
<u>Women, War and Peace in South Asia : Beyond Victimhood to Agency</u>	by Rita Manchanda (Editor)
When Memory Dies	S Sivanandan
Anil's Ghost	Michael Ondaatje
The Jam Fruit Tree	Carl Muller
The Pleasures of Conquest	Yasmin Goonaratne
Reef	Romesh Goonesekera
A Change of Skies	Yasmin Gooneratne
Funny Boy	Shyam Selvadurai

## Internet Websites

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/lktoc.html>

<http://infolanka.com/org/srilanka/org.html>

## In Country

### Arrival

“Rarely have I felt so welcome anywhere as quickly as I have in Sri Lanka”

- Stephen C Berkwitz. Sri Lanka – A matter of Heart, *Excursions and Explorations*, ed., Tissa Jayatilaka

You will be met at the airport by a staff member of the US-SLFC or by one of our representatives and taken to a guesthouse/hotel in Colombo. If you wish to, you can remain at this guesthouse/hotel till you receive your initial orientation and documentation such as your American Embassy Identity Card.

Once orientation is over, you could move to a guesthouse in your town of residence until you identify suitable accommodation.

**Guest-houses** are usually family owned, bed and breakfast points where you will be let a room in the family home. These cost around \$35 (non A/C)-\$ 45-90 (A/C) a night but do not have room service or swimming pool facilities. However, these guesthouses, due to the personalised service, character and homeliness, are usually highly recommended by scholars as better options over hotels.

**3\*\*\* hotels** costs around \$ 127++ a night with breakfast and have facilities such as AC and hot water.

### Security and Emergency Contact Details

In recent years, some US Fulbright scholars have had to contend with challenges their predecessors did not encounter.

Hence it is necessary for the US-SLFC to emphasise in stronger terms the procedures to be followed in times of emergency. In all emergencies, your first point of contact should always be the Fulbright Commission (and its staff) which is your home away from home while you are in Sri Lanka.

We can be reached between 8.00 am to 5.00 pm on weekdays (except holidays) at telephone number 011 256 4176 (from Colombo: 256 4176; from overseas: + 94 11 256 4176).

And please do not hesitate to call the following personal mobile numbers at any time of day:

Tissa Jayatilaka: 0777 789 677 (from overseas: +94 777 789 677)

Ramya Jirasinghe: 077 658 4349 (from overseas: +94 77 658 4349)

Chitra Marambe: 0777 620 862 (from overseas: +94 777 620 862)

**Additionally, the Embassy may be contacted on 011-249-8500 or 011-249-8686 during normal working hours.**

## Emergency contact:

- If you are a U.S. citizen with an after-hours emergency, please call the duty officer at: **077-725-6307**. If you are unable to reach the duty officer on this number, please dial **011-249-8500**. If you are dialing from Sri Lanka: **077-725-6307**. If you are unable to reach the duty officer on this number please dial **249-8500** (from a landline in Colombo), **011-249-8500** (from a cellphone anywhere in Sri Lanka or from a landline outside the Colombo district)

## Orientation

Orientation will be held in October (we will inform you of the actual date closer to it). It will be best to schedule your arrival in Sri Lanka a day or so earlier to recover from the long journey.

Orientation is aimed at providing you with information and skills to settle into Sri Lanka and will include both an administrative segment as well as a cultural segment.

"In the weeks we spent acclimatizing, we had the choice of living like conventional foreigners in air-conditioned cocoons or adapting to real Sri Lankan life. Of course, western-type shops and restaurants provided relief from the heat. Plopping into a cool chair in a 5-star hotel with a nice-cold beer was blissful. But the open air-market had so much more fascination. The vegetable man, before serving you, spits red betel juice into an open drain and then, with great attention to detail, pulls out a bouquet of curry leaf stems, mixed with lemon grass and other greens for seasoning curries.

....

So in the end, we straddled two worlds, the one for its comforts, the other for its charm. And now, a year later, we remember most vividly the charm."

-Suzanne Wood. Sabbatical in Colombo, *Excursions and Explorations*, ed., Tissa Jayatilaka

## Jet Lag<sup>5</sup>

Whether or not the travel is for business or pleasure, jet lag can make anyone feel out of sorts. Headache, tiredness during the day, or insomnia at night from jet lag can be especially bothersome to those with busy schedules, which do not afford a day or two of rest following a long distance trip. Generally, travel from west to east produces more symptoms of jet lag than the same time zone change when traveling the opposite direction.

In order to lessen jetlag, many experts recommend that the traveller adopt the new local hours for sleeping and for being awake before arriving at the new location. This can be facilitated by shifting one's schedule by an hour or so at least several days before traveling. The correct timing of meals might also be useful, although a much-touted anti-jet lag diet has not been fully evaluated. Dehydration, which can be worsened by consuming alcoholic beverages, is a common problem after a long plane ride. One should avoid all alcoholic beverages and consume more than the usual amount of other beverages, such as juices and water. Many experts recommend avoiding caffeinated beverages, whereas there are some

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<sup>5</sup> Courtesy, *Health and Medical Information*, US Embassy, Colombo.

that feel caffeine may help to adapt to the new time zone when taken at the correct time. Dehydration can also cause constipation, so a diet rich in fiber may help avoid this as well.

To prevent tired or sore muscles, a number of stretching exercises can be performed while sitting or standing in the plane. In addition, exercise is a way to stimulate metabolism and mental alertness. The use of sleeping pills (or alcohol for a similar effect) should be avoided. These can often cause prolonged effects that may decrease concentration, memory, and affect other areas of performance, which are important, especially if one has to work shortly after arrival.

### **Coping with the Tropical Climate<sup>6</sup>**

If you have not come directly from another tropical area you will no doubt experience some problems adjusting to the heat and humidity, here are a few tips that may make acclimation a bit more pleasant.

A. Take it easy when you get here. It takes about six weeks to get acclimated. Plan on giving yourself rest during these days.

B. Fluid intake should be increased to make up for the loss due to evaporation of perspiration. It is not unusual to lose 2-3 quarts of water by perspiration while engaged in outdoor sports and other heavy physical activities.

C. Keep in mind that heat and humidity cause foods to spoil rapidly. Prepare only what can be eaten at one meal. Eliminate leftovers, particularly custards, puddings, etc. A great deal of diarrhea is caused by spoiled foods.

D. Humidity, plus heat, promote the growth of skin fungus and bacteria. Since we cannot eliminate the heat, keeping the body clean and dry may prevent many skin infections. Keep the body folds dry by being particularly careful to dry thoroughly (don't forget the area between the toes). A blow dryer is great for thorough drying of body folds. Encourage your children to follow this practice. Avoid rubber sneakers, pantyhose, and other tight and confining garments. They contribute to skin infections, dermatitis and vaginitis.

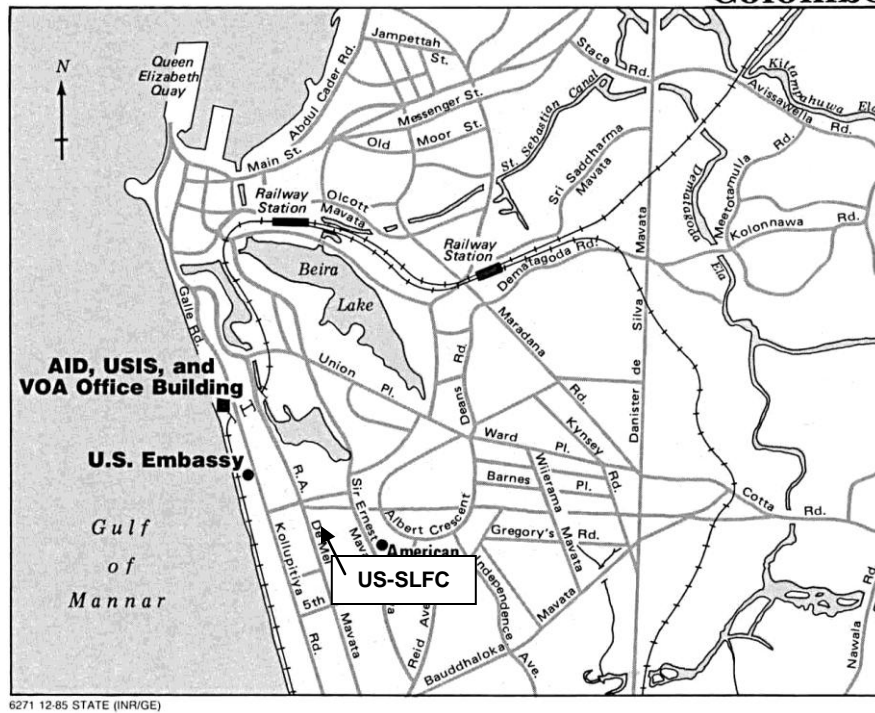
E. Use some caution when out in the sun. Sun block/screen lotions should be used even if you tend to tan easily. Maximum exposure to ultraviolet rays occurs between the hours of 10 AM and 3 PM so do limit your sun exposure especially during hours.

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<sup>6</sup> Courtesy, *Health and Medical Information*, US Embassy, Colombo.



## Colombo



### What's where in Colombo

[www.yamu.lk/](http://www.yamu.lk/)

### Restaurants

The cost of a meal in hotel restaurants is generally moderate by US standards. Meals in other local restaurants are inexpensive to moderate. Lunch is usually served from 12.00 noon to 2.30 pm, dinner from 7.00pm to 11.00pm. Many restaurants use Monosodium Glutamate (MSG) liberally. If you have severe reactions to MSG, it is best to ask the waiter, being quite specific. They may be able to prepare your meal without it.

Most restaurants will do takeout and some delivery, when requested.

#### Tipping:

Most hotel and restaurant bills include a service charge of approximately 10 - 20 % on the net cost. However, people still leave a tip for the waiter that served them in addition to the billed service charge. The decision to do so is however an individual decision and the amount may range from 3% to 10%.

### Transport

"Before I came to Sri Lanka, I was advised not to try to do too many things there in one day. It would be frustrating, if not impossible, given the slower pace of life and difficulty travelling

from one place to another. Yet I found myself stubbornly attempting to accomplish several different tasks each time I ventured out."

- Stephen C Berkwitz, Sri Lanka – a Matter of Heart, *Excursions and Explorations*, ed., Tissa Jayatilaka

Chaos on the streets is an inevitable part of life in Sri Lanka. Officially, a thorough highway code does exist within the system, but slack and arbitrary implementation have made "*there are no rules*" a good rule of thumb for a newcomer who needs to ensure her own safety on the streets. This would apply particularly when using the zebra crossings etc. However, as you get used to the chaos you will notice unofficial rules and courtesies that are practised particularly by drivers, such as, giving way to a vehicle that's driving up hill on narrow mountain roads, a short beep of the horn to thank a another driver for a road courtesy.

### Public transport

Public transport is relatively cheap and quite plentiful. You will have a choice of buses, cabs, trains and three-wheelers (auto rickshaws).

### Metered cabs:

Are a good way to travel in comfort without the hassle of having to bargain your fare.

(the numbers below are for Colombo)

Tel: 011 2588 588

Or

011 2818818

Or budget cabs: 011 5500 500

There are also metered budget autorickshaws (three wheelers): call to book – 077 0588 588

### Getting a driving licence

"Roads in Sri Lanka have no lanes, no shoulders and no traffic regulations – at least, none that are respected. Ox carts, bicycles, wheelchairs, pedestrians, cows and goats enter the traffic at their leisure. So do motor cycles carrying entire families, "trishaws"(three wheeled, motor scooter taxis), buses permanently leaning to port with passengers pouring out of doors and windows, and vans and trucks overflowing with tropical fruits, vegetables, chickens and other wares.... It took us almost a month to brave that initial step and another week or two before we approached our automobile without a feeling of terror....By the time we left Sri Lanka, however, we were further horrified to realize that we were driving just as aggressively and recklessly as our Sri Lankan counterparts"

-Jay Erstling and Pixie Martin. Unexpected Discoveries in Serendip, *Excursions and Explorations*, ed., Tissa Jayatilaka

For anyone determined to brave the hazards of Sri Lankan roads, driving one's own vehicle is an option, although it may not be the most recommended one. If you plan to drive a vehicle in Sri Lanka, the most convenient way to get a permit is to bring an International Driving Permit from the USA in addition to your driving licence. If you have the International Driving Permit you will only need to get it endorsed by the

Automobile Association of Sri Lanka:

HEADQUARTERS:

40, Sir M.M.M. Mawatha  
COLOMBO 3

MAILING ADDRESS:	P.O. Box 338, COLOMBO
TELEPHONE:	+94 1 421 528 +94 1 421 529
TELEFAX:	+94 1 446 074
E-MAIL:	<a href="mailto:aacmotor@sltnet.lk">aacmotor@sltnet.lk</a>

Most Grantees find hiring a driver an easier option.

[www.lanka.info/carRentals/carHireSriLankaHelp.jsp](http://www.lanka.info/carRentals/carHireSriLankaHelp.jsp)

### Housing

Once you move to your town of residence in Sri Lanka you will need to secure suitable housing. There is a range of options that you could choose from, and these include the following. Accommodation, particularly in Colombo (within the city limits), tends to be expensive. It will be necessary to decide whether you want the conveyance of being located in central areas of the city and pay more, or to be located about 20-30 minutes away and save the stipend:

- **Detached houses** - within private premises (on average could range from Rs 40,000 – Rs 150,000 and over, per month)
- **Annexes** - separate units within the premises of, and part of, another house (facilities such as separate entrance/ separate utility billing systems may vary but on average could range from Rs 35,000 – and over, per month)
- **Apartments/ flats** – in modern apartment complexes (on average could range from Rs 65,000 – Rs 150,000 and over, per month)
- **Rooms** – let out by households, usually with no cooking facilities or separate entrance (on average could range from Rs, 12000 – Rs 50,000 per month) but may include meals.
- **Long-stay guesthouses** – give special rates for long-stay guests and some provide cooking facilities.

#### Searching for accommodation.

The *Sunday Observer* and the *Sunday Times* Hit Ads are the traditional newspaper source of information on available accommodation. These newspaper usually gives a listing of accommodation available in the main towns. However, word of mouth and personal networks also go a long way in Sri Lanka and most Grantees have said these are quite effective (alternative) means of getting the right accommodation.

There are also many websites that list flats and houses:

<http://www.lankapropertyweb.com/rentals/index.php>

Once you have identified a suitable house, you will need to negotiate conditions such as facilities, down payments (*it is common for Landlords to request payment of rent several months in advance or a security deposit*), utility bills and phone connections with your landlord. Based on the conditions you have discussed, your landlord may draw up a lease agreement.

If you secure your accommodation through a third party, such as an estate agent or an individual, you should not need to pay him any commissions or fees as these are borne by the owner of the property.

Accommodation is almost always for immediate occupation, which means it is not possible for the US-SLFC to secure accommodation before you arrive. Also differences in personal preferences and tastes have proved that it is extremely difficult to secure or identify housing on someone else's behalf. Therefore you will need to identify the accommodation that fits your individual budget, needs and preferences.

However the US-SLFC will give you all possible assistance in your search for accommodation.

### **Names of property owners with apartments previously occupied by Fulbrighters**

These property owners may be willing to offer their house/s to other Fulbrighters, provided the houses are vacant (check with Ramya for more listings):

#### **Contact information of property owners in Kandy:**

- Suneel de Silva: Tel:081-223-5144

"Suneel is extremely kind and welcoming. She has just built two beautiful annexes to her home, and would be extremely helpful to anyone looking for help beginning their networking and research activities both in Kandy and elsewhere. Even though I didn't stay with her, she went out of her way to help me find the place I eventually chose close to the Peradeniya campus." Former Fulbrighter

- Mrs. Wijeratne (and her son, Jayantha): Tel 081-222-5679
- Mr Upali Indraguptha: Tel 011 285-6045  
081-222-8249

A newly built 4 bed roomed house on Primrose Hill

- Mrs Dunuwilla – Long/ short stay guesthouse  
22 Sangaraja Mawatha  
Kandy  
Tel 081 222-2075

### **Property owners in Colombo**

"Most homes or flats expect that you will pay all if not a good proportion of ALL of your rent up front. It was recommended to us, wisely, that you make sure that things work properly before you move in as it is often more difficult to have problems remedied after you occupy the house or flat.

Electricity is expensive in Sri Lanka which becomes a factor when you are trying to cool your house or flat. Ceiling fans are very practical and relatively inexpensive to operate. Air conditioners are much, much more expensive.

As a family, there are some advantages to living in Colombo 03, 04, 05, or 07 from the perspective of convenience. However, you will tend to pay a premium. We have several friends who live in the Nawala, Kotte, and Nugegoda that have far nicer accommodation for the same or less than we pay.

Do think about mosquitoes (dengue fever) when you rent. Not many houses or flats have screens. We purchased and use mosquito nets. "

-Dr Rees Hughes, US Senior Scholar, Organisation of Professional Associations

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"Finding a place to live is an extremely social process. Apartments and annexes are always available in just about any area; the trick is finding them. It took me about one month of searching to find a space I was happy with in Kandy. Rather than work with sparse newspaper advertisements, it was far more efficient to just begin asking around using my new contacts. Fulbrighters are hot commodities amongst Sri Lankan landlords, for a variety of reasons. Within a week of beginning my inquiries, the landlords were contacting *me*, not the other way around. I ended up with a gorgeous hillside annex in Kandy (which is far cheaper than Colombo), paying 8000 rupees per month".

- Ira Nichols-Barrer, US Junior Scholar, University of Peradeniya.

## **Money Matters**

### Grantee allowance and the cost of living in Sri Lanka

The airport arrival lounge has several bank-kiosks where you will be able to convert US\$ (cash or travellers cheques) into Sri Lankan Rupees. It is recommended that you convert your money at the airport. Once you are in Colombo you will also be able to convert your money at most banks between 9.00 am and 3.00 pm on weekdays.

You will be required to collect your allowance from the US-SLFC (on arrival; during working hours) as you will then get the opportunity to discuss any queries you may have about your allowances and methods of payment.

Most grantees open bank accounts in Sri Lanka and funds could be credited to your bank account if you pass on the account information to the Accountant.

All Fulbright grantees receive the following allowances:

- A monthly maintenance allowance
- A Books and incidental allowance
- A one-time relocation/ settling-in allowance
- Roundtrip airfare

And

- Other allowances depending on the nature of the grant and/or the number of dependents accompanying the grantee.

Dependents of student researchers and ETAs are not eligible for an allowance.

The following link will give you an approximate conversation rate of the US\$ to the Sri Lanka Rupee. The US-SLFC uses the exchange rate set by the US Embassy:

<http://www.fieba.net/converter>

### **Banks**

Sri Lanka has branches of many leading international banks such as HSBC, Standard Chartered and CitiBank. There are also several local banks owned by the Government or privately which provide a variety of services such as options for deposits, current and savings accounts, ATM services, Credit Cards services and money transfer services.

There is also a branch of Western Union (for money transfers) in Colombo.

### **Communication**

#### Purchasing a phone/ getting a connection

Landlines:

Many houses that are available for leasing provide a landline telephone that's already installed. No doubt this is the most convenient way to access a phone for yourself. However, you may need to check if the landline has International Dial-up facilities (IDD).

Getting your own landline connection may involve refusals, cash deposits and delays, however, the privately owned telephone companies may prove more efficient than the Government owned company if you want get a landline in your name:

Companies providing landline connections:

SLT – (Government owned) [www.slt.lk](http://www.slt.lk)

Suntel – (private) [www.suntel.lk](http://www.suntel.lk)

Lanka Bell – (private) [www.lankabell.net](http://www.lankabell.net)

#### Mobile phone connections:

Sri Lanka has several mobile phone companies, which offer connections and pre-paid cards. A wide range of mobile phones and handsets are also available at prices ranging from Rs10,000 – 50,000 however, as a short-term resident you may need to pay a deposit for you connection and handset. Pre paid plans can be obtained over the counter.

Companies offering mobile phones and connections:

- Dialogue – Dialogue GSM (MTN Networks – Pvt Ltd, No 475 Union Place, Colombo 2. tel: 267-8700) [www.dialogGSM.com](http://www.dialogGSM.com)

- Mobitel – 108 W A D Ramanayake Mw Col 3 – Tel: 233-0550

#### Postal Services:

The postal services, unfortunately, continue to be much maligned due to inevitable delays and theft.

A letter to/from the United States by airmail can take several weeks while sea mail can take as long as a few months. Apart from the time factor involved, there will always be the risk of pilferage. It won't be uncommon to find that envelopes have been torn at the edges or ripped open, particularly if they contain anything in addition to a letter such as photos. "Registered mail" may be more secure than ordinary post.

Parcels are not delivered to the door, (unless they come within the category and value of a "small packet"), and will need to be cleared through Customs at the Postal Department Office.

Courier services however are reliable, although they are several times the cost of regular post. Couriers and freight forwarders that have been used by former grantees are:

- Kangaroo Packing and Shipping Services (82/1, Kandy Road, Kiribathgoda – tel: 0777 7783070)
- Sea Air associates (Pvt.) Ltd.(39/47, Nelson Lane, Colombo 3 – Tel: 4 812900)
- DHL
- UPS

#### **Shipping goods home – Advice from Elizabeth Frantz, U.S. Student 2006**

I thought I might save you all sometime if I told you what I learned about the various options. The prices are for sending things to London, so you'd have to call to get exact quotes for US destinations. But this will give you some idea.

I ended up sending my things with TRICO, which had the best service and overall best deal given the weight of my bags. (I sent 46 kgs, a LOT of books and documents.)

Be sure to bring a detailed packing list with you. It's also good to bring your passport and ticket with you in case they need them. Some, including Trico, do not accept credit cards.

DHL ended up being too expensive for me (\$150 more than Trico). But as Chitra informed me, the Fulbright Commission has an account with DHL, and provided that your shipment costs do not exceed our stipend, which I believe is 37,800 Rs, they can bill the Fulbright directly. You might want to double-check with Chitra about this and ask her for the account details before you go to DHL.

If you are sending suitcases, when you hand them over, be sure that if you've locked them, which is a good idea, you've either given one of the keys to the person handling the order or given him the combination. He will need to be able to open them when the time comes for them to be inspected at customs.

Trico Maritime (Pvt)Ltd,



No. 50, K Cyril C Perera Mawatha (aka Bloemendahl Street)

Colombo 13

Sri Lanka

DIRECT CONTACT - Sudath Costa, 238-6177-9

Air freight. 1,300 Rs per kg. No additional charge. This includes taking them to the airport, clearing customs in SL and in UK, door delivery in the UK. Arrives within 2-3 days. They do not need to keep your passport.

UPS Air Freight

Contact Sameeve at 479-8522

2 Hunupitiya Cross Road, Colombo 2, Open 8:30 to 5 pm.

Colombo Airport to London Heathrow Airport costs \$5 per kilo. For transport and documentation handling here in SL, flat rate charge is 15,000 Rs. Takes 2-3 days to arrive. No pick-up charges. Have to request local UPS office to deliver it to your door. Otherwise, pick up at airport and clear it at customs yourself. They need to keep your passport and ticket for one to two days while they clear the goods through customs. They accept a MINIMUM of 45 kgs.

H. Don Carolis & Sons Ltd.

65 Station passage,

Colombo 2

Email: [dons@eureka.lk](mailto:dons@eureka.lk)

Telephone: 2422405, 2472949

Went there. They do packing and pick-up from your house. Unsure of rates.

Mass Logistics & Shipping(pvt.) Ltd.

Level 2 Basils Building

342 Galle Road,

Colombo 3

Email: [masslog@slt.lk](mailto:masslog@slt.lk)

Tel. 2301819-20, 75377001-4

SAID THEY DO NOT DEAL WITH PERSONAL EFFECTS

DHL

011 2 304304

First 500 grams costs 3,800 Rs. Each additional 500 grams will cost 800 Rs. Arrives in two or three working days. They don't offer sea freight services. They have a promotional rate Jumbo Box which can hold up to 25 kgs for Rs 27,485. Dimensions of the box are 48 cm by 45 cm by 35 cm. (These rates have changed)

### Health

Allison Busch, in *Tips for Visitors to South Asia*, gives the following advice on health:

"Wash hands frequently using sanitizer or antibacterial soap. The former is not available in (India), the latter is (common brand names include Dettol and Savlon).  
Avoid street food, no matter how tempting.

Avoid fruits and vegetables that can't be peeled. If you cannot resist eating unpeeled produce treat it first for 20 minutes with a solution made of water and couple of grains of potassium permanganate and rinse carefully with bottled water before consuming.

When in restaurants eat only freshly-cooked food that is piping hot.

Vegetarian food is much safer than meat-based dishes.

IF you have reason to doubt the quality of food, DON'T EAT IT – better to be hungry than sick.  
Be careful to stay hydrated at all times. Drink more water than you think you need. Ensuring adequate water intake is particularly crucial for hot season travellers.

Hot-season travellers may wish to add more salt to their food, particularly if they are active. This will guard against dehydration.

Eat as much yoghurt/(curd) as you can manage. It is a staple of the Indian diet for good reason. It helps significantly in protecting stomach health."

The medical services in Sri Lanka are reasonably good and incredibly cheap. We had several occasions to use private hospitals (e.g., Asiri) and the total cost was less than the co-pay on our insurance policy in the States. We have chosen to drink only boiled or bottled water. Although there are many people who feel that filtered water is acceptable in Colombo, most of my Sri Lankan colleagues drink boiled water

- Dr Rees Hughes, US Senior Scholar, Organisation of Professional Associations

## **Things To Do**

We have found that making the connection with the Community Liaison Officer (CLO) at the American Embassy was a good way to participate in a number of family-friendly activities. This was especially nice around holidays like Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas when our daughters were a bit homesick.

Access to the swimming pool at the Gregory's Road Embassy Recreational Complex has been wonderful. It helps to take the edge off of the heat and humidity of Colombo. Once Fulbrighters have completed their security clearance, they have been permitted to use that facility. Some families have chosen to join the Colombo Swim Club which is a more social environment with a nice restaurant but costs to join (and may be at capacity). [I do not know much about other alternatives like Otters and the Sinhalese Sports Club.]

Our daughters joined the British Council Library to take advantage of their excellent literature collection for children and young people. The Indian Cultural Centre (Buddhaloka Mawatha), Goethe Centre (Gregory's Road), British Council, etc. sponsor interesting cultural and cinematic programs at very low cost. It is generally possible to get on to a mailing list for regular postings. We have also enjoyed the symphony performances (which are usually advertised in the English-language newspapers).

Arrangements with some sports grounds can be made to have access to walk or run around the perimeter. It is a nice, safe alternative to walking along the Colombo streets.

- Dr Rees Hughes, US Senior Scholar, Organisation of Professional Associations

## **Life and Work in Sri Lanka**

### Dress code:

Student researchers can get away with being considerably more informal than University lecturers or professionals. For young men, clean slacks and collared, short-sleeved shirts constitute the average campus dress code. Outside of athletics, shorts remain somewhat scandalous. Sandals are the norm.

### Social and work culture:

University life operates in fits and starts. Semesters begin and end unpredictably, due to any number of unplanned administrative decisions and nearly constant labor disputes. I learned to expect the unexpected, and, especially, how to plan my schedule extremely flexibly. Classroom etiquette, by contrast, is considerably more formal and rigid than what can be found in the US. In my experience, developing good relationships with professors always entailed watching, listening, and healthy amounts of deference.

- Ira Nichols-Barrer, US Junior Scholar, University of Peradeniya.

## **The US Scholar in Sri Lanka**

“A day in the life of a junior scholar...”

On an average Tuesday in Kandy, I wake up around 7:30am, have a breakfast of cereal and fruit, and do a few household chores (remove the daily trash, clean, wash some clothes and hang them to dry). By 9:30am, I have begun the rickety thirty-minute bus ride to Peradeniya University, picking up a “take away” packet of rice and curry at a rest house along the way. On campus, I meet with my advisor to discuss the progress of my writing, research, and future travel plans. Then I head over to the library to do a few hours of archive-research and photocopying, or perhaps attend a guest lecture. After lunch, I catch the bus into Kandy town to send a few emails, collect some developed film from an earlier research trip, and shop for dinner. Feeling a little tired, I hire a three-wheeler to weave home through the afternoon traffic in a brisk five-minutes. My landlord brings me evening tea as I read that day’s newspaper, and soon afterwards I begin to make dinner (pasta and tomato sauce) for myself and the two other Fulbright grantees living nearby. After dinner and dishes, I catch the 11pm English-language news on television, yawn, and get ready for a good night’s sleep.

- Ira Nichols-Barrer, US Junior Scholar, University of Peradeniya.

## **Shopping**

Sri Lanka has become, over the years a favourite place for shopping for certain items, particularly western style clothes (sometimes with brand-labels such as Gap, Tommy Hilfiger, Victoria’s secret and Marks and Spencer) as a result of the large number of garment production houses that are located in the country. It is possible to get some of the well-known brands for just a fraction of their price. Handicrafts and Jewellery are also other popular shopping items.

If you are offered antiques, please keep in mind that un-authorised exportation of antiques from Sri Lanka is prohibited. Special authorisation through the Commissioner of Archaeology must be acquired. Two duplicate photographs of the item and archaeological Department Forms declaring value and age need to be submitted. Items 50 years or older are considered antiques; however, any furniture or large item of any age are required to go through this process. Be aware of these requirements, and that some items in many shops come under this category.

Sri Lanka is also a great location to get most things made-to-measure. These include clothes (tailoring and designing), jewellery, furniture etc.

1. Cotton Collection – men’s and women’s clothes, including t-shirts, skirts, dresses, pants, blouses, etc.

Flower Road and Majestic City branches

2. Thiagara – men’s and women’s clothes; household items like tupperware; hair accessories, etc

Thimbirigasyaya Road, Colombo 5

3. P and A – men’s and women’s clothes

Davidson Road, near Wellawatta

4. Arpico – grocery, kitchenware (pots, pans, blenders, silverware, dinnerware, etc), garden supplies, school supplies. Lots of everything.

Shops in Hyde Park, Colombo 2, Battaramulla, Dehiwala,

5. Raheema – good basic grocery store. Fresh vegetables and fruit, canned goods, fresh milk, ice cream, etc

Thurston Road, Colombo 3

1. DSI – good shoes at decent prices

2. ODEL –department store

Branches all over Colombo

Seema Shah, Junior Scholar, ICES

## Vacations, leaving the country and travel overseas

### Telephone Numbers

<b>Staff US-SLFC</b>	<b>Office</b>	<b>Residence</b>
Mr Tissa Jayatilaka, Executive Director	256-4176	288-4580 077-778-9677 (mobile)
Ramya Chamalie Jirasinghe, Deputy Director	256-4176	286-2490 077-658-4349
Ms Chitra Marambe, Accountant	256-4176	259-5206
Nelum Senadira, Student Advisor	256-4176	287-3582
Soraya Usuf, Executive Secretary	256-4176	
<b>US Embassy</b>	<b>Office</b>	<b>Residence</b>
Ambassador	244-8007 x 2200	269-6223
Deputy Chief of Mission	244-8007 x 2202	269-5494
Public Affairs Office	242-1624	
Political Officer	244-8007 x 2423	
Foreign Service Health Practitioner	244-8807 x 2206	
Regional Security Officer	244-8007 x 2428	
<b>Language Teachers</b>	<b>Office</b>	<b>Residence</b>
Chandani Tilakaratne	244-8007 x 408	258-4645
Senani Liyanage	244-8007 x 408	250-0945
<b>Police</b>		
Headquarters	242-1111	
Emergency	243-3333	
<b>Guest Houses in Colombo</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Tel Number</b>

The Bungalow	6-8 Havelock Place Colombo 5	(011) 258-5191
Mrs Kodikara's	Guildford Crescent Colombo 7	(11) 269-4612
Padmini Nanayakkara's	20 Chelsea Gardens Colombo 3	(011) 257-3095
Horton Place Lodge	100/5 Horton Gardens Colombo 7	(011) 269-6305
Mrs Jesudasens's	No 6, 6 <sup>th</sup> Lane Colombo 3	(011) 257-5232
Le Maison des Arts (close to the beach – 12 km from Colombo)	20 Beach Road Mount Lavinia	(011) 271-6203
Hotel Western <a href="http://www.hotelwestern.com">www.hotelwestern.com</a>	35 Frankfurt Place Bambalapitiya	(011) 250-7161
Ms Chitrangai de Fonseka's (with guest kitchen)	7 Karlshue Gardens Colombo 10	(011) 296-7919
Sri Lanka Hotel School	Galle Road, Colombo 3	(011) 238-2202
Hasu Chandra (guest kitchen/ close to the beach – 12 km from Colombo) (\$30)	37 Beach Road Mount Lavinia	(011) 273-3173
<b>Guest Houses in Kandy</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Tel Number</b>
Lake Bungalow	22/2 Sangarajah Mw Kandy	081-222-2075
<b>Cabs</b>		
Kangaroo Cabs		258 8588
Airport Express		555 5050
ACE Cabs		281 8818
<b>Care Rental / hire</b>		
Casons <a href="http://www.casoncar.com">www.casoncar.com</a>	181 Gothami Gardens Colombo 8	(011) 440-5070
Arthur's Tours	184 Galle Road Colombo 6	(011) 236-3796 (011) 258-2978
Havelock Travels	23 Sunethradevi Rd Kohuwela	(011) 282-7817
<b>Other</b>		
Flight inquiries - airport		(011) 225-2861/4
Fort Railway Station	Fort, Colombo 1	(011) 241-4215
Audio Visual Equipment For sale and rent	Sweedish Trading	(011) 269-9934
Custom made leather shoes	Ceylon Boot Manufacturers	(011) 259-8973/232-9053
Custom tailored clothes (men's)	Apothecaries Tailoring	(011) 244-5242
Custom tailored clothes (men's)	Hercules	(011) 258-6287
Custom tailored clothes (Women's)	Inspirations	(011) 536- 3802
For custom designed clothes	Michael Wijesuriya	(011) 250-1299
For custom designed clothes	Lou Ching Wong	(011) 269-4002

## *Appendix* **DOMESTIC NOTES FOR SRI LANKA**

Helpful information for Americans who plan to spend more than 30 days in Sri Lanka, living independent of hotels and tourist restaurants.

This guide is prepared in a spirit of sharing and hope that future visitors will enjoy Sri Lanka as we have in the 2008-2009 cohort of Fulbright scholars and spouses. Perhaps this information will smooth a few rough edges and help readers to enjoy this beautiful and varied country.

A guide prepared by the U.S.-Sri Lanka Fulbright Commission has helpful details for the scholars and their families before leaving the U.S. This addition is intended for use after arrival. Contributors include Tim and Kristina Sullivan; Siri and Toby Jarayat; John Stifler; Lea Krivchenia; Leah Worthington; Ben Schonthal and Paula Seward; and Alison Newman and Brian Newell.

There may be too many generalizations in this document. Sri Lankans are as individual as it is possible to be, and we do not mean to imply that they are uniform or unanimous. We describe some of our own individual experiences, not a perfect picture of any predictable experience you may have. Each of us has met different people in different circumstances, which of course is the summary of all communications. It depends on who is talking to whom, when and where.

We hope there are no errors. But if there are, my apologies are extended, with hope that you will notify the US-SL Fulbright Commission so they may make corrections.

Kristina Replogle Sullivan  
March 2009

### **Moving In**

You have found your house/annex/apartment or rooms. You have a written agreement with your landlord or landlady. Congratulations! Below is a checklist for reasonably comfortable and healthful living. Whatever your landlord did not provide, you may want to buy or ask for. Electricity is expensive compared to U.S. rates, but many of the assets below can be operated only when they are needed.

It is likely to take a few weeks to get your house in order and feel comfortable. You are adapting to a new climate, a new culture, a new language, and a new job. Take it one day at a time, and keep a journal—you will be surprised how much more you have accomplished than you might have thought otherwise.

### **Kitchen**

Water filter. Tap water is treated, but not to U.S standards for potable water. Many people use a multigallon filter into which boiled tap water is poured. Other families subscribe to delivery services that deliver large bottles of purified water to the house weekly. Use this water in an electric coffee pot, for making ice cubes, for drinking, or for mixing powdered drinks. Food can be cooked in tap water if it is brought to boiling and held for at least three minutes. Washing dishes in tap water is OK too. Air drying is more sanitary than wiping.

Delivery service is rarely available outside Colombo. Consult the yellow pages, called rainbow pages by Sri Lanka Telephone.

Cooker. In Sri Lanka, this is a two-burner propane appliance that sits on a table or counter. It features immediacy and flexibility, but cooks a bit hotter than typical U.S. domestic ranges. When the propane runs out, take the empty tank to a gas dealer, who will sell a full tank for about US\$20, or LRs.2,000. Be careful to secure the clamp and connection before using the cooker. If flames come out of any place other than the top of the burner, it is defective. Replace it or take it to a shop for repair. Use this appliance in a well ventilated area.

Refrigerator. Because of the cost of electricity, refrigerators are small here. Perhaps they are also small because food shopping is done several times a week and not once a week. The refrigerator is designed to hold only the most necessary stored items—butter, cheese, milk, yogurt or curd, delicate vegetables, and eggs.

Pantry shelf. A “pantry” in Sri Lanka refers to a kitchen with built-in cupboards, appliances, and the like, in contrast to the traditional kitchen, which has a wood-burning hearth.

Food storage. People store food in bug-proof jars and plastic boxes. Food is especially attractive to ants and cockroaches, which can seem to be immune to any and all sprays and deterrents. Mechanical defenses are effective. Jam jars can be set in a pan or bowl of water—ants cannot cross water. Old fashion kitchen cupboards had legs set in bowls of water for this purpose.

Sink. Sinks with small bowls and attached drain boards are common. Running hot water in the kitchen is rare. Most dishes clean well in tap water with plenty of detergent.

Older houses may have a new, modern sink in addition to an old fashion concrete basin that is less protected from rain. These were useful when cooking was done on fires of coconut husks, which burned the pots black. Gray water drainage was traditionally in an open outdoor drain leading to a creek or pond.

Hearth. Many new homes, and all traditional homes, had fireplaces in the kitchen on which most cooking was done. Dried coconut husks were burned and both clay and metal pots used. Many cooks will tell you that the flavors of the smoke, especially when twigs of spice trees and herbal leaves are added to the fire, are the secrets of good old traditional dishes. Organic burning contributes to more air pollution than propane, however, so if your choices are green you might use the cooker more than the hearth.

Metric measures. The history of metric, or SI (Système Internationale) measures, is a fascinating one. The U.S. might have adopted metric measures in 1790, as Thomas Jefferson advocated, but a single vote in Congress defeated the proposal. Today, only the United States, Liberia, and Burma do not officially use the SI system. Great Britain is in the process of converting from British or Imperial measures to SI. SI is used in science universally, and is easier than the Imperial system because it works in multiples of ten. Below are some equivalent basic units; more detailed tables are published in comprehensive cookbooks and some guide books.

Almost all products in Sri Lanka are sold by metric weight or measure. Gasoline (petrol) is sold by liter; fabric by meter; vegetables by kilogram; postage by gram; eggs in packages of ten.



The basic units are the meter for length and the gram for weight. The meter was determined by the French Academy of Science in 1791, the latest of specifications since the original 18<sup>th</sup> century decision, to be one ten millionth ( $1/10,000,000$ ) the distance of the earth's meridian along a quadrant. The distance from the North Pole to a line near Dunkirk, France, was divided by 10,000,000 to reach the length of the meter. The gram was specified as the weight of one cubic centimeter of water at a temperature of maximum density (4 degrees Centigrade). Both these specifications have been upgraded in recent years to reflect exact measures of mass. Your favorite physicist will be delighted to explain more on this.

### Metric Prefixes

Milli- thousandth

Cent- hundred

Kilo- thousand

### Length, Distance, Area

2.54 centimeters (cm) = 1 inch

100 centimeters = 1 meter

1000 millimeters (mm) = 1 meter

1 meter = 1.3 yards = 39 inches

1000 meters = 1 kilometer (km) = 0.62 miles

1 mile = 1.61 km

1 hectare = 10,000 square meters (sq m) = 0.4 acres

### Weight

1 gram (gm) = 0.035 ounce

1 ounce = 28.3 grams

1 kilogram (kg) = 2.20 pounds

1 pound = 0.45 kilograms

1 US ton = 907 kilograms

1 British ton = 2240 lbs.; 1 US ton = 2000 lbs.

### Volume

1 pint = about ½ liter

1 cup = about ¼ liter = 250 milliliters (ml)

1 liter (l) = slightly more than 1 US quart and slightly less than 1 British quart

1 gallon = 3.79 liters

1 British (Imperial) gallon = 4.55 liters

### Common Notable Measures

Water boils at 100°C = 212°F.

Water freezes at 0°C = 32°F

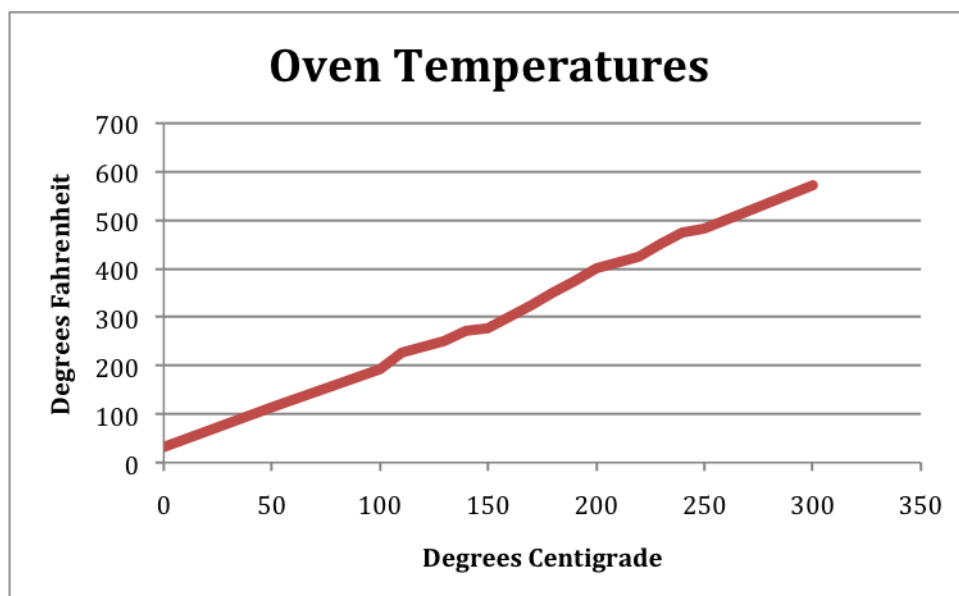
176°C = 350°F (medium hot oven)

Healthy temperature of a person = 37° = 98.6°F

6 feet = 1.84 meters = 184 centimeters

36 inches = 91.44 centimeters

Oven. Temperatures are likely to be in Centigrade. Some models will have gas marks, widely used in the United Kingdom. To convert recipes in Fahrenheit, consult a reliable cookbook, or use the Oven Temperature chart below.



You can also use the formulas:

Convert Fahrenheit to Centigrade: Subtract 32 and multiply by 5/9.

Convert Centigrade to Fahrenheit: Multiply by 1.8 and add 32.

Gas ovens manufactured in the U.K. or Europe may be calibrated by gas marks, which will be part of recipe instructions. Gas marks can be used as follows:

Gas Mark	C	F	Description
¼	110	225	Very cool; very slow
½	130	250	
1	140	275	Cool
2	150	300	
3	170	325	Very moderate
4	180	350	
5	190	375	Moderately hot
6	200	400	
7	220	425	Hot
8	230	450	
9	240	475	Very hot

A Furnished Kitchen. This might be unusual but it will have pots and pans, spoons and knives, a cutting board or two, a can opener, a colander or strainer, and tongs. Sri Lankans eat with their hands so flatwear is generally minimal. Older kitchens will have a flat grinding stone and thick stone rolling pin, for crushing spices, and also a large, heavy mortar and pestle for crushing garlic, herbs, and other spices. A Sri Lankan kitchen will also be equipped with a coconut scraper, often a vicious serrated blade clamped to a table and operated with a hand crank. It is used to scrape the coconut meat out of fresh coconuts and is much easier to use than a spoon or knife. To prevent accidental cuts and scrapes, keep it covered.

Many modern kitchens also have an electric blender, a food processor, and a mixer. Mechanical dishwashers are rare.

#### Sinhalese names for distinctive cooking equipment

Aappa thaachchiya	small bowl-shaped pan for making hoppers (aappa)
Hiramane	coconut scraper permanently fixed to a small bench
Mirisgala	grinding stone (literally, "chile stone")
Nambiliya	rice washing bowl (grooves in the bottom trap sand)
Pittu bambuwa	cylindrical steamer used to make pittu
Roti thatiya	round iron griddle for making roti
Stringhopper pans	small pans about 4" (10cm) diameter for steaming stringhoppers
Vangediya	large stone mortar used with <i>molgaha</i> , large pestle

## **BEDROOM**

Beds. Many Asians believe that a firm bed is healthy, and also cooler when the weather is hot. It is possible that you have a Western style bed with springs and a Western mattress. But you might have a local bed, which is built with wooden slats or a wooden table-like construction supporting a thin foam pad on top. Conventional sheets are used on both types of bed.

Almirahs (or almyrahs). Since most tropical houses are built without closets, which trap moisture and insects, clothes storage is in almirahs. These can be fancy or plain, with more or fewer drawers inside the doors. Many can be locked, and have "secret" drawers for valuables. They have been popular for several hundred years in South Asia. Each person usually has one, and they vary in size. Before storing clothes inside, clean thoroughly, spray with insect repellent, and line with paper or sprinkle moth balls to deter silverfish and other unwanted residents. Repeat as often as needed. Some modern almirahs are equipped with light bulb sockets or dehumidifiers to help prevent leather shoes, bags, and belts from mildew and mold. The (incandescent) light should be turned on all the time.

Mosquito nets. Malaria and dengue fever are just two of the diseases carried by mosquitoes. Mosquito nets can be hung from the big ceiling hook and tucked all around the mattress or pad at bedtime, protecting the sleeper from the pests. Good quality mosquito nets are inexpensive and washable. During the day they are usually twisted and knotted, out of the way, suspended over the bed. Size and shape are personal preferences, but if you buy one be sure it is big enough to tuck all around the bed. Measure the bed before you go shopping, in centimeters. One inch equals about 2.5 centimeters.

Ceiling fan/air conditioner. It is a personal decision whether to sleep with a ceiling fan or an air conditioner. An air conditioned room is more or less sealed against mosquitoes, so sleepers with air conditioning don't usually need mosquito nets. Air conditioning is also dehumidifying and can help prevent prickly heat rash. Fans use less electricity and are cheaper to operate. Typical temperatures in the hot season are high in all the coastal areas, topping 100°F (about 32°C) with high humidity.

Towel rack. Older homes have wooden towel racks in the bedrooms that often match the almirahs. Ventilation in the bedroom is usually better than in the bathroom.

## **BATHROOM**

Most Sri Lankans bathe twice daily, and also wash their hands before and after each meal. The bathroom may have a shower or a spigot to fill a small bowl or bucket that is poured over the body. The toilet will have a hand held spray hose to clean the bottom with; toilet paper may be used for drying. Shower water is gray water and may drain directly to a garden or outdoor stream.

Water pressure and tank systems vary. You will quickly discover the capacity of your tank and how to refill it; you will likely need to open a valve to refill it. Then turn off the water to avoid wasting water. Most tanks have an overflow pipe that will spill water into the yard, so it is obvious when it is overfilled. New hot water heaters tend to be of the on-demand variety.

## **LIVING ROOM/VERANDAH**

Chairs, love seats, and sofas with a table for serving tea are frequently used in homes. High humidity and overstuffed furniture are not compatible, so caned seats are comfortable and very popular. There are many antiques made of precious woods dating from Dutch, Portuguese, and English colonial years; these may be fragile. The traditional Sri Lankan place to relax at home is on the verandah. Modern homes and apartments have living rooms adapted to the climate.

## **DOMESTIC HELP**

Americans are sometimes flummoxed by the question of whether or not to hire a person or persons to help with shopping, cooking, cleaning, driving, gardening, or other domestic tasks. It is a personal decision, and dependent on the house or annex you are renting, and on the needs of your family, but one might consider the following points:

- a) Many people with needed skills are glad to have work. They can make your life easier and also better informed, help you study language, and show you how things are done locally. They can help you meet the neighbors and handle door-to-door salesmen.
- b) The relationship between you and your maid/cook/driver can be friendly but it is basically a professional one. They take pride in their work and you can rely on them to do their best.
- c) It is important to explain clearly what you want done, and when, with the help of a translator if necessary. Friendly interview skills will also help you discover why a job is being forgotten.
- d) Ask your Fulbright staffers what the typical wages would be for the skills and time you wish to hire. A cook who comes daily to your house, sweeps the house and verandah, and cares for your baby is likely to want more than a person who shops and cooks for you and goes home at 4. People who speak English expect to be paid a little more than people who don't.
- e) References are important. One of the most essential qualifications is honesty.
- f) Be forthright about when you expect to be leaving Sri Lanka, and prepare an official reference for each person you hire. If you are pleased with their work, it would be welcome to give them a financial bonus when you leave. You should also plan to release them during their service with you to attend religious ceremonies and rituals, family events, or national holiday celebrations, all of which may require travel, and several days' absence from your house.

- g) Some, but not all, household helpers are self-sufficient and self-directed. Others are more like teenagers who need careful and attentive supervision. Try to be honest with yourself about what will be best for you and your family before you hire.
- h) Review the health status of anyone working in your kitchen or with your small children. Screen for communicable diseases such as tuberculosis, and offer to pay for the test.
- i) If things are not smooth at first, muster your patience. Don't scream and shout at individuals; it is a sign of the worst kind in Sri Lanka. Many people will simply quit if they are yelled at. Asians generally prize the trait of self control, and admire people who show it.

## OTHER

Helpers' quarters. Many old houses were built with servants' quarters, where there would be a kitchen, an outdoor bathing area, a toilet, and several rooms as well as a garden. There still are old families with servants and servants' families living in the same complex. Servants' quarters are usually more modestly built and furnished than the main house, but housing (and food) is one of the benefits of the job—sometimes clothes as well. A residential helper may have a family a good distance away, and appreciate time to travel home from time to time. Friends and relatives who visit the servants are not usually entertained inside the main house, but in the kitchen or on the servants' verandah. Maintenance and repairs are the responsibility of the homeowner.

Laundry. Automatic washing machines are very popular appliances in Sri Lanka, operating with tap water and a range of features. Laundry is universally hung to dry outside on lines, or on racks standing in the garden or behind the house, or sometimes on fences or gates. It is the true international flag, especially where electricity is expensive and the sun shines hot! Dryers are simply not available to private customers. Start early in the day to allow drying time; allow two to three days for heavy cottons to dry. Do laundry often to avoid ruining clothes that will mildew if left to sit too long. Folding racks are sold in hardware, houseware and dry goods shops ranging in size, quality, and price. If you buy one of these, select rust-proof materials.

It is the water, not the detergent, that does the work of cleaning textiles. As the capacity of most local machines is smaller than average U.S. machines, it is important to measure detergent carefully. Package directions tend to be vague, since manufacturers hope you will use as much as possible. If you are lucky, you will have a brochure or manual explaining your machine features. Experiment carefully with liquid bleach, starting with no more than a half cup (120 ml), fully dissolved in soapy water before adding clothes, for a full load. Full strength bleach will burn your skin and burn holes in your clothes. For any load, make sure there is room for the wet clothes to agitate in the water and to move freely.

For a full machine that uses eight to ten gallons of water, washing a load of about 5-7 kilos (10-15 lbs.), use:

4 four scant tablespoons dry detergent, **or**  
¼ cup, **or**  
60 milliliters measure.

Be certain detergent is fully dissolved before adding clothes. Rinse thoroughly, at least two cycles, as residual detergent is a skin irritant.

Spot removal: As soon as possible after a spill or spot, dab dishwashing liquid on stain. Rubbing with a wet bar of bath soap can be effective too. Wash normally. Some grease stains will come out if you rub the fabric with shortening; it binds to the grease and comes out with it. To remove ballpoint ink marks, spray stain with hair spray; let sit a few minutes and wash normally.

Pressing: The best time to easily press a shirt is when it is damp from the wash, with as much water as possible squeezed or spun out. Set iron to appropriate heat (medium for silk, hot for cotton, hottest for linen) and iron damp shirt. Hang on a hanger to finish drying. To make homemade starch, dilute up to one tablespoon (15ml) cornstarch (corn flour) in one quart (or 1 liter) water. Shake thoroughly and spray from plastic spray bottle onto dry clothing before ironing. Improve an ironing board with three or four thicknesses of towels on a table or other firm surface.

Floors. The rural tradition in South Asia is to make hard floors with mud, water, and oxblood; one of the clichés of Sri Lankan literature is the modern folks who show off their wealth by tiling their floors. Polished concrete is very popular, as is polished and waxed concrete (and cheaper than tiles). Floors should be swept every day to clean them of the detritus of dead flying insects, ordinary dust, and grit. Sri Lankans remove their shoes to enter homes, and housewives take pride in clean floors. Some wear slippers, rubber thong sandals, inside, as the colored waxes stain the feet (and the bedsheets).

Dust. High humidity and blowing dust combine to create a curious damp dust that is best controlled by frequent cleaning. Careful storage of cameras, computers, printers, CD players, and other electronics can protect them from this element.

Insects. Sri Lanka is in a tropical rain forest climate, with some variety in different regions. This variety is relative; areas described as “dry” are still *much* more humid than Arizona. Living things of all kinds thrive, regardless of the housekeeper’s efforts to discourage some of them. Ants, cockroaches, silverfish, beetles, worms, giant black scorpions, termites, flying ants, gnats, spiders, leeches, and other creatures do their best to share the benefits of roof, walls, and clean water. Few of these creatures will harm you, but some are alarming on first acquaintance. Devout Buddhists and Hindus will not kill them—they will tenderly scoop them up and toss them outside.

Geckos. Small lizards with little suckers on their feet live on the walls and ceilings of many homes and offices. They make a chirping sound, and live on mosquitoes and other small flying insects, and do not bite. Their tails are sometimes bitten off by birds or cats, but they grow back.

Snakes. There are many snakes native to Sri Lanka. Very generally, the smaller ones are the most poisonous. If you are bitten, seek medical help immediately.

Hikers Alert: **Leeches** are common in and around Kandy and several of the rainforest preserves. They are moisture seeking, appearing most often after a

rain storm. Carry salt or a strong salt solution with you and pour it on a leech that attaches itself to your skin. It will fall off, reacting to the salt. Some guidebooks recommend wearing "leech socks," knee length tightly knitted socks into which you tuck your long pants. If a leech attaches to your sock, it is easily pulled off after you get home. Wear long sleeve shirts, buttoned closed, if you plan a lot of hiking in wet areas. Leeches are found most often at or below knee level, depending on the height of wet plant growth. They do not carry disease.

Electricity. Normal electric power is 220 to 240 volts; each outlet has a switch for turning on the power to that switch. There is no universal "on" or "off" position. Power sometimes fails, and a flashlight is quite useful. Power surge strips are highly recommended to protect your computer from power fluctuations.

Privacy. Iron gratings cover most residential windows to prevent thieves and wild monkeys from climbing in. Specialty companies can install additional blinds, curtains, or shutters. Covered windows can also be closed against heat and sun, or to keep cool air inside.

## **Guests**

Your friends and relatives, colleagues and acquaintances, may decide that this is their irresistible opportunity to visit sunny Sri Lanka—they know someone to stay with!

Your friends will expect you to help them to see Sri Lanka. Local travel agencies and hotels can refer you to the services and transportation you will need. Just as for weddings, there is no substitute for good planning. You can't guarantee the vacation of a lifetime, but you can be prepared with the following information, based on our experiences.

Travel in Sri Lanka is slower than in the U.S., even though the distances on the map may not appear to be long. The 25-year-long civil war has delayed investment in roads, train tracks and cars and stations, and in other aspects of ground travel. Allow an hour to drive from Colombo to Negombo (airport); at least three hours from Colombo to Kandy.

- (i) For U.S. residents, a minimum of ten days is needed. The travel distance is long, the tickets are expensive, and there is quite a bit to see. Discourage anyone who can't commit to ten days or longer for the entire trip.
- (ii) Advise your friends to eat yogurt every day for a month before departure from the U.S. This will help condition their gastro-intestinal tracts for the food and water they will encounter.
- (iii) On a map of Sri Lanka, outline three travel "loops": a northern loop including the cultural cities of Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, and Dambulla; a central loop for Kandy and the tea highlands; and a southern loop for Galle and the beaches and Yala National Park nature preserve. Describe these to your friends and have them choose two. If they have more time, of course, consider all three. Many popular guide books offer other specialized routes, for example, culinary tours; botanical tours; tea tasting and appreciation; hiking; bird watching.
- (iv) Use a reputable guide book to plot your trip. Hire a driver and vehicle to transport you and your friends and your luggage and any special gear (surfboards, tripods, hiking boots, underwater camera cages) and reach an



- agreement about cost sharing. Budget a car and driver about \$70 per day, hotels and meals at least \$50 per day per person, or more.
- (v) If you live in Colombo, this plan gives visitors time to recover from jet lag for a day or two at first, and to have a day to shop and pack before departure for home. If you live elsewhere in Sri Lanka, add a few days for travel time to and from the airport. The town of Negombo, an hour north of Colombo, is the official address of the international airport, and offers its own beach and seafood attractions as well as an old town with canals.
  - (vi) An informal poll of four sets of visitors assigned the following ranking of favorite sites:
    - a. Elephant Orphanage at Pinnawala
    - b. Tea plantation (private stay with manager and family)
    - c. Anuradhapura/Polonnaruwa (historic cities and ruins)
    - d. Beaches (youthful visitors)
  - (vii) Your own special interests might reveal a different set of loops and different choices. Try to plan plenty of time for sleep, as hot weather and constant travel can be wearying for travelers of any age. Learn the Sinhalese or Tamil language terms for any special conditions or services your friends and you may need, such as allergies to food ingredients, refrigeration for medicine, or access to a clinic or hospital. The most critical words can be “thank you” and “please.”

## **Day to day, FAQ**

### ***My clothes are wearing out. I can't find anything to fit in the ready made shops.***

Whether you are tall, small, or large, a tailor can fit you personally. This is cheaper than in the U.S. but the quality of the results is more variable. Ask a Sri Lankan friend to help you identify a good tailor. They are often associated with textile shops, where you select your fabric, they measure you, sew the clothes, and you return to try them on and pay for them. If they need adjustment, have it done before you pay. It is wise to try this with an inexpensive fabric before going with the fancy silk, as tailor skills vary. You can also give the tailor a garment to copy, and specify that you want it copied completely, from cut to seam finishes.

Both men and women do tailoring and bring to their work a range of skills and abilities. A handmade custom garment is not going to be exactly the same as the commercial garment bought off the rack in the U.S.

You could buy more traditional clothes that are well understood by local tailors—shirts and pants for men, salwar kameez (tunics with loose pants and shawls) and saris for women. These need the same approach as above, but have a higher chance of success. Salwar (pants) are made of lightweight fabric with a drawstring waist; tunics can be almost any length with a shaped neckline, with or without sleeves.

Saris are basically a length of straight fabric about 46 inches (117 centimeters, or 1.17 meter) wide. Saris are usually about six yards or meters long, and are commonly sold with an extra meter for making the blouse (or “sari jacket”). The sari is worn by wrapping it over and tucking it into a snug waisted ankle length petticoat (underskirt) that coordinates in color with the sari. A Sri Lankan friend or the sari shop workers will be delighted to teach you at least

one way to wrap, tuck, pleat, and wear the sari. You can also buy special pins to secure the pleats in front and the end that is pleated and worn over one shoulder. Local beauty salons can also help you expertly drape the sari.

If you buy a sari, the shop tailor can make you the blouse, for which you may need to buy extra fabric to make the blouse lining. You will also need extra fabric for the petticoat. The tailor will finish the ends of the sari after cutting off the blouse piece, make the blouse, and make the petticoat. If you buy a salwar set, you can buy a kit of fabrics designed for this purpose, or choose from the bolts of fabric in the shop. Most salwar sets include two to three meters for the pants, two to three meters for the shawl that matches the pants, and three to four meters of fabric for the tunic. Although there are different styles of salwars, and they are made in many fabrics, the soft, loose, light cotton and linen fabrics are most comfortable in tropical Sri Lanka. The tunic can be sleeveless, or made with any length of sleeve. The cost of these garments is very modest, depending on the fabric you choose.

The tailoring fee is typically about 20 percent of the cost of the fabric, but it is negotiable and can be discussed with respect to the difficulty of the style you have chosen, the forgiveness of the fabric at hand (some fabrics cannot be pinned, for example, because the holes made by pins won't heal), and the time you allow. Very fast work can be done but it will be more expensive and the finishing may be done in haste. Seven to ten days is a reasonable time to expect a completed garment; expect to pay a higher price if you need the garment earlier. Women may find more polite service by asking for a woman tailor, especially to do the measuring. Several of us have experienced unpleasant and unwelcome groping by male tailors.

Buying fabric: For your own use or for gifts, the following are general guidelines. Smaller or larger pieces might be used for decorative pockets, sleeves, or other garment parts.

Man's shirt: 2.5 – 3 meters, at least 40 inches (142 cm) wide  
Pants/trousers: 2.5 – 3 meters, at least 40 inches wide (classic cut is on the straight grain of fabric for garment to hang properly and wear well)  
Woman's dress: 3 or more meters, depending on length and size  
Small child's shirt or pants: 1 – 1.5 meters  
Sarong: usually 105-110cm (42-44 inches) wide, 2.25 meters long. Cut edges are stitched in a fell seam. If you buy one for the fabric, be sure the seam is not stitched.  
Sari: 6 meters (6.5 yards) flat length, same width as sarong. Usually one end is decorated, to fall over the shoulder (*pallu* in Hindi, *sari pota* in Sinhala)

### ***Where can I find Western food ingredients?***

The local market, overflowing with tropical fruits and local fish, may not carry many of the packaged or canned foods on which Americans rely. There are several chains of general grocery stores that offer some of this type of food, but the variety and selection are narrower than in the U.S. Cargills Food City, Keells, some private markets, and Arpico stores sell American cereal, peanut butter, bread, imported beverages and candy, and other foods. Import duties are high, however, and local products are significantly cheaper and sold in the same stores along with fresh produce and consumer goods. Allow time for shopping as packaging is different from U.S. customs, and many foods are sold in smaller packages so they can be easily carried home by a shopper on foot. In hot weather it is difficult to store foods, so many families do the marketing every day or every other day, buying only small quantities.

***I'm not supposed to drive a car here. How do I do errands?***

Study a Sinhalese phrase book and ask Sri Lankans to recommend a reliable driver. Many drivers speak limited English. In Colombo you can use metered taxi services that are summoned by phone. Outside Colombo the trishaws are practical, after you agree on a price, and most drivers are friendly and helpful. Explain to the driver where you want to go ("Hatton Bank, pharmacy, Arpico, then home") to settle on a fair price for your transportation and his waiting time. He will take you to your destinations and wait for you to complete your business. You can leave packages in the vehicle once you establish a good relationship. If you keep the phone numbers of two or three drivers you like, you can always find a ride if one driver is occupied or out of town.

Develop a habit of carrying small bills. Many drivers say they cannot make change.

Although the embassy security people recommend against it, you can also ride local buses for a much cheaper fare than trishaws or taxis, and walk, as many Sri Lankans do. Practice high alertness as a pedestrian. Watch for traffic in all directions, uneven pavement, missing sidewalks, trash, etc., and close your bag against theft and pickpocketing. Use a folding umbrella as a parasol, as locals do. It also makes you more visible to drivers.

***What about shopping by mail?***

Customs duties are erratic, and postal deliveries in Sri Lanka are unpredictable. Many mail order companies will not ship to Sri Lanka. If you persevere, you may find one, but the duties and extra fees will likely nearly double the cost of your purchase. If it reaches you, it will not be on a predictable schedule.

***I don't like being approached by touts all the time, or by snoop people asking where I am from or where I am going. What should I do?***

Sri Lankans do this to each other as well, and usually mean to be friendly. It is OK to ignore them. It is also OK to say, "I am going about my business." Shaking your open hand with the palm angled to the ground is a way to tell a tout that you are not interested in his wares. Try the Sinhala phrase, "mata epa," (I don't want) to discourage an aggressive tout. Reserve aggressive language for extreme circumstances.

***How do I find a class or a teacher to help me study Sinhalese?***

This is more difficult than it sounds, as many Sri Lankans are working to learn English for business and tourism purposes. Ask Sri Lankan acquaintances to recommend someone, or buy a language instruction book and find a college student to work with you. There are several language instruction books carried by the Vijitha Yapa bookstores. Try these:

J.B. Disanayaka, *Say It in Sinhala*. Stamford Lake. ISBN 955-8733-40-7  
This is a pocket size book (about 11 by 16 cm) with very good introductions to Sinhala; specialized vocabulary help; and a glossary. The tenth edition was published in 2009.

Shirley Perera, *Sinhala Katha karamu (Let us speak Sinhala)*. Stamford Lake. ISBN 655-685-057-3

This is the first volume of a series of more detailed grammar and usage instruction.

Lonely Planet Phrasebooks and Swarna Pragnaratne, *Sinhala*. Lonely Planet Publications. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 2008. ISBN 978-1-74104-160-6  
A useful small (9.5 by 14 cm) book printed in English and Sinhala, with glossary and helpful tips on usage and customary phrases. Hard to find.

***But I want to study Tamil, the third language widely spoken in Sri Lanka.***

Current law in Sri Lanka dictates that all agencies of the central government use Sinhala, Tamil, and English for all official communication. On the ground, however, this is not a universal practice. About 80 percent of the total population is ethnically Sinhalese, although many also speak and write Tamil.

Millions of people in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu speak Tamil, generally the same Tamil spoken by Sri Lankan Tamils. The spoken and written forms of the language are quite different, as in Sinhalese, so many students find it best to start with conversation and work on writing later.

Ron Asher, E. Annamalai, *Colloquial Tamil*. Routledge. 2007. CD/MP3, tapes also available to accompany book. ISBN-10: 0415187885; ISBN-13: 978-0415187886. Kindle edition also available, Taylor & Francis, 2007; ASIN B000Q36XES. Focuses on Tamil Nadu (not Sri Lanka). The only one in a sparse field, however; mixed reviews. May be best to use with a live teacher, for whom there is no substitute in any language.

***I am cooking for one. Is it practical to cook?***

Sri Lankans enjoy many foods prepared hot and fresh at little shops called *kade*. Locate a hopper shop for light pancakes, try an egg hopper (bowl shape pancake with egg in the middle), or check out one of the many bakeries, which sell savory stuffed buns as well as pastries. Many bakeries also sell single servings of curd (water buffalo milk yogurt) and ice cream. You can also enjoy fruit platters at small restaurants, and explore the carryout services of your neighborhood restaurants. Pizza Hut will deliver in many towns. It might be practical to keep tea, powdered milk, sugar, and fruit, in the house for breakfast; but you can get by without cooking if you are determined. You can stock up on bottled fruit drinks for snacks. On national holidays and *poya* (holy observance) days, you might have to look for a tourist restaurant.

Another strategy would be to eat as many Sri Lankans do: rice and curry for breakfast, with milk tea; a rice packet for lunch (rice wrapped with servings of three or four curries), the largest meal of the day; and a light supper of a stuffed bun or two, with tea. Have some fruit with your tea breaks during the day.

***What if I do want to cook for one?***

Cook a full recipe and reheat leftovers for other meals. Your refrigerator will be spacious for one person. Adapt your favorite American recipes with local ingredients. Homemade roti, for example, can be a delicious substitute for tortillas, and guacamole is easy to make when local avocados are in season.

***Can you recommend a cookbook?***

Since you asked...

Douglas Bullis and Wendy Hutton, *The Food of Sri Lanka: Authentic Recipes from the Isle of Gems*. Periplus Editions Ltd. 2001. ISBN 962-593-760-9 One of a series of beautiful books, this one is an excellent introduction to Sri Lanka and her foods. It explains geography, ethnicity, ingredients, and customs, cooking techniques, and includes excellent recipes from five-star chefs with clear directions for home preparation. Measures are both English and metric. Beautiful color photographs; includes mail order and Web addresses for the Western cook whose market doesn't carry specialized ingredients.

Chandra Dissnayake, *Ceylon Cookery*, 8<sup>th</sup> Ed. Stamford Lake. 2008. ISBN 955-8733-06-7  
Ms. Dissanayake has written a comprehensive and practical book on Sri Lankan cooking, including helpful notes on kitchens and ingredients. She was a trained home economist and well known chef and culinary advisor. Recipes are clear, reliable, delicious—and written with English (not metric) measures. Newer editions have nice color photographs but the captions are hard to find. Includes Western and Sri Lanka dishes.

Wendy Hutton, *Handy Pocket Guide to Tropical Fruits*. Photos by Alberto Cassio. Periplus Editions Ltd. 2004. ISBN 987-0-7946-0188-1 or 0-7946-0188-X. This pocket size book features excellent color photos of fruit, leaves, and trees and plants. Focus is on Thai fruits; pertinent for all of tropical Asia. Hutton is a well respected cookbook author who includes a few Western and Asian recipes. Text includes information about where each fruit is native, popular medicinal and culinary uses, and descriptions of texture and flavor. For example: "The durian, Southeast Asia's most highly prized fruit, is also its most contro-versial because of the overpowering odour. It is the only fruit banned from airplane cabins, hotels and some public transport." (p. 14)

Terry Tan, *Asian Cook*. Jacqui Small/Aurum Press Ltd. 2003. ISBN 1-903221-12-9. A beautiful book that includes photos and explanations of cooking equipment and serving dishes, plus recipes, in a combination of English and metric measure, for China, Japan, Korea, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Indochina, Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Mr. Tan's talent in cooking, technique, and food history are evident, with recipes from his own and other kitchens. This book focuses on the equipment more than on the recipes, very helpful for identifying what you see in the market—all those odd looking pots and pans have specific purposes. Winner of the Gourmand Award for Best Asian Cook Book in the World.

***How do I clean the spider webs that multiply in the ceiling corners, without getting spiders in my hair?***

Securely wrap an old towel or pillowcase to the business end of a broom. Use it to wipe the ceiling where it meets the wall. Carefully remove your cloth and burn it, or toss it into the wash.

To clean ceiling fan blades, make sure the fan is off, stand on a sturdy chair or table, and wipe clean with a moist cloth. Frequent cleaning is less yucky than waiting for the brown gunk to land in clumps all over the room.

***I am having trouble finding...***

Consider that you are asking for something using American English. Many cookbooks and dictionaries publish "translations" between U.S. and British customary terms. British terms are more likely to be understood here.

<u>U.S.</u>	<u>Sri Lankan/British</u>
Aspirin	Acetylsalicylic acid (ASA) - Disprin
Bandaids	Plasters (sold individually)
Bus stop	Bus halt
Car trunk	Boot
Cell (phone)	Mobile
Cookies	Biscuits

Gas	Petrol (for autos)
Gas station	Petrol shed
Ibuprofen	Iso-butyl-propanoic-phenolic acid; Arthrofen, Calprofen, Ebufac, Galprofen, Brufen
Line (to wait in)	Queue
Napkin	Serviette
Pants	Trousers
Quality kitchen knives	Visit a specialty store such as Abdul Rahim's (Kandy)
Rubbing alcohol	Spirits (at a pharmacy)
Shorts (clothes)	Shorts
Shorts (snacks)	Short eats
Sneakers (shoes)	Trainers

<u>U.S.</u>	<u>Sri Lankan/British</u>
Towels & sheets	Colombo: Pettah district, specialty stores, or House of Fashion (28 Duplication Road), an outlet for household textiles and clothes at rock bottom prices Kandy: Laksala store, Peradeniya; central market area
Tylenol	Paracetamol, Panadol (pharmacy may recognize chemical name, para-acetylamino-phenol)
Underpants	Knickers/ panties

### ***What other books might be a good investment?***

The following can be found in almost any English language bookstore in Sri Lanka. There is a rich literary tradition in Sri Lanka for Sinhalese, Tamil, and English language work, interpreting religion, conflict, ethnicity, colonialism, and the unique island in the Indian Ocean. Consult one of the comprehensive guide books for authors and titles that you will most enjoy. There are also a number of books publishing professional photographs, large format and small.

Thera Mahanama, *The Mahavamsa: The Great Chronicle of Sri Lanka*. 5<sup>th</sup> century ACE text. Douglas Bullis, historical commentary. Vijitha Yapa Publications. First Published by Asian Humanities Press, USA. 2005. ISBN 955-1266-09-9. This is the great narrative story that is the historical and cultural bible of the Sinhalese people. It will help you understand the introduction of Theravada Buddhism to Lanka and the history of the Buddhist nation-state that followed. It will also give you insight into the art you will see in every part of Sri Lanka.

Michael Meyler, *A Dictionary of Sri Lankan English*. Self published. 2007. ISBN 978-955-50542-0-1. Mr.

Meyler is a longtime teacher of English for the British Council, which is comparable to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. He has published definitions of hundreds of terms used in Sri Lanka that have different or unknown meanings when compared to British Standard English. This excellent book will tell you the difference between samba, sambar, sambhur and sambol, and many other useful distinctions.

Dr. T. Somasekaram, *Arjuna's A – Z Street Guide of Colombo and Suburbs*. Includes Galle, Kandy, Nuwara Eliya, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Negombo, Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Jaffna. Arjuna Consulting Co. Ltd., Dehiwala. 2006. ISBN 955-9276-14-4.

The same company publishes a guide to Colombo, popularly called the "A to zed." Prepared by the former surveyor general of Sri Lanka, maps and indices are clear and precise. Very helpful for navigating in or out of town.